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COSY CORNERS

By PAULINE PHELPS AND MARION SHORT



SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New York

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The famous comedy in three acts, by Anne Warner. 7 males, 6 females. Three interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours.

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SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
Now and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

129
1720

Cosy Corners

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

PAULINE PHELPS AND MARION SHORT

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DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

MARIETTA—*A round-eyed child of eight, preternaturally inquisitive. Her general manner shows the influence of her late association with the orphan asylum, rather than MRS. BARTLETT'S care. Her hair is worn in two tiny pig-tails.*

MRS. BARTLETT—*A fleshy woman of fifty, radiating good-will and good wishes toward everyone. Her clothes look as if they had been designed by a country dressmaker not quite in touch with the latest styles.*

BOB BARTLETT—*A rather vealy boy of twenty.*

LIBBIE and JANE—*They are fourteen and fifteen years of age, respectively, and are of the romantic, gushing type, given to following the latest fashion in "flapper" attire and hair dressing.*

EDNA PETTIBONE—*A nineteen-year-old girl of vivid personality, but cowed by her father's severity into drab submissiveness to his authority. Her dresses, though of inexpensive material, are artistic in cut and color, and she walks with the ease and grace of a natural dancer.*

DEACON PETTIBONE—*A dominant, crabbed old man of sixty-five.*

CLYDE HOLLISTER—*A handsome, scholarly-looking young man. His voice is deep and expressive, his gestures eloquent and easy.*

AVIS MERRILL—*A happy-hearted, beautiful, young girl of twenty-two. Her poise is perfect, and her exquisite Paris attire is in marked contrast to that of the country people around her.*

MORRIS GRANEY—*A worldly city man, fleshy and jovial in appearance. About forty years of age.*

SOPHIE ANDERSON—*An everyday village girl of seventeen, with rolling, sentimental eyes, and a nervous giggle.*

AMANDA STEBBINS—*A thin-faced, sharp-nosed, slab-sided spinster of forty-five, with a particularly hard and racuous voice.*

SCENES

ACT I—*Lawn in front of Cosy Corners Congregational Church.*

ACT II—*Dining Room of Parsonage.*

ACT III—*Same as Act II.*

ACT IV—*Same as Acts II and III.*

Cosy Corners

ACT I

TIME: *The Present.*

SCENE: *The lawn in front of the Cosy Corners Congregational Church. Benches and camp chairs at R. and L. A table at C. with ice-cream freezer standing beside it. Ice-cream dishes on table, also cake plates, paper napkins, etc., such as are usually in order at an ice-cream social. At back near some shrubbery is a low saw-horse with a plank resting against it, which has evidently been used by children as a see-saw. There is a large basket at L. of table. Dish-pan on stump near table.*

DISCOVERED: MRS. BARTLETT, standing back of table gathering up some dishes that BOB, after drying, is handing over to her. She is putting some of these back into the basket, as the social is about over. BOB wears an apron over his light suit of clothes. JANE and LIBBIE are seated on bench at R.; EDNA at L. Near EDNA stands MARIETTA, wriggling about uneasily as she watches EDNA dispose of the last of a dish of ice-cream.

MARIETTA. Are you going to eat it all? 'Cause if you ain't, I'll finish it for you.

MRS. BARTLETT. Come right over here, Marietta. an' stop starin' at Edna like that. Of course she's goin' to finish her ice-cream, an' even if she wasn't, you've had plenty of your own.

MARIETTA. Is it pretty near all gone out of the freezer?

BOB. Nope. Plenty left over.

MRS. BARTLETT. I'm plannin' to buy what's left myself. Soon as you finish up the dishes, Bob, you may as well take off your apron an' carry that freezer over onto our back porch.

BOB. All right, Mom.

MARIETTA. Oh, goody, goody! How much of it can I have for supper, Ma Bartlett?

MRS. BARTLETT. Land sakes, child, you've got three dishes inside of you now!

MARIETTA. But ain't orphans always hungry?

MRS. BARTLETT. Every time Marietta wants her own way, she thinks she'll get it by remindin' me she's an orphan.

MARIETTA. How many dishes can I put inside me at supper?

MRS. BARTLETT. You'd think she'd been starved ever since I adopted her into the family.

MARIETTA. (*Persisting with her questioning*) But how many dishes——?

MRS. BARTLETT. One, maybe! Stop askin' foolish questions!

MARIETTA. (*Dancing around*) Ice-cream for supper! Ice-cream for supper! (*To LIBBIE and JANE.*) Don't you wish you was invited over to our house?

BOB. (*Amused*) That kid's the living question-mark, if you ask me!

LIBBIE. (*Rises*) I guess it's pretty near time we were going home.

JANE. (*Rising also*) Yes, I guess it is. (*They carry their dishes to the table.*)

LIBBIE. It was lovely ice-cream, Mrs. Bartlett.

JANE. Just lovely. I ate every speck that was on my plate. (*As LIBBIE opens purse.*) Now let me pay for it, Libbie.

LIBBIE. No, Jane, let *me* pay for it.

JANE. But you paid for mine at the last ice-cream social.

LIBBIE. Why, Jane! How can you say such a thing. You know you paid for mine. (*Elbows JANE.*) Let *me* pay, Mrs. Bartlett.

JANE. (*Elbows LIBBIE*) No. Here, take my money, please. She paid last time. (*Both offer money to MRS. BARTLETT.*)

LIBBIE. No, she paid.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, each one pays her own *this* time, an' you can settle it between you afterwards. There's your change, Jane, an' yours, Libbie. (*As she makes change, MARIETTA surreptitiously eats a small portion of ice-cream she finds on LIBBIE'S plate.*)

BOB. Scat! (*This is said for MARIETTA'S benefit, who quickly sets down the plate and scampers around behind EDNA.*)

EDNA. I'll take a plate of cream. (*Goes forward, takes plate and pays for cream.*) There's the even change, Mrs. Bartlett.

MRS. BARTLETT. All right, Edna. I thought your father might drop in to patronize us, seein' as it's a half holiday. (*Enter DEACON PETTIBONE, R., carrying a buggy-whip.*) Oh, Cousin Jonathan, I was just speakin' of you. I'm glad you came before I'd sent back the freezer.

DEACON. Been gettin' my horse shod. I don't want any ice-cream. Sp'iles my appetite, an' should think 'twould sp'ile anyone's, havin' a half burned

church starin' 'em in the face like that one. (*Gestures L., with buggy-whip.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*With dignity*) Havin' the social on the church green was my idea, Cousin Jonathan. I thought folks would patronize us double, seein' as we're raisin' funds to have the ruins taken away. But, it was a pretty small crowd. (*Sighs, then smiles, pluckily.*) Well, better luck next time. The social was got up kind of sudden anyway. I guess maybe we didn't advertise it enough.

DEACON. You're too cheerful, Cynthia. Everybody's too cheerful, includin' the parson. How folks can stand around an' smile when the church is goin' to rack an' ruin, beats me.

MRS. BARTLETT. But the church isn't goin' to rack an' ruin, an' I don't think you ought to say such discouragin' things before our young folks!

LIBBIE. (*As she and Jane come down from table*) Oh, Jane, come on over to my house.

JANE. No, you come over to mine.

LIBBIE. Mine's the nearest.

JANE. Well, if I come over to your house for half an hour, then will you come over to mine for half an hour?

LIBBIE. Umhm.

DEACON. Don't make yourself sick eatin' too much, Edna. (*Tastes her ice-cream.*) Humph! Fit to p'ison you. (*Eats the rest of it.*)

JANE. Oh, Libbie, you're the dearest girl!

LIBBIE. I am not. You're the dearest! (*They put their arms about each other and skip toward L.*)

JANE. (*As they go*) No, you are.

LIBBIE. No, you are! (*They exit at L.*)

MARIETTA. Ma Bartlett, what makes Libbie an' Jane talk so much an' laugh so much?

MRS. BARTLETT. There you go askin' questions again!

MARIETTA. But what makes 'em?

MRS. BARTLETT. Oh, nothin', except most girls at that age are pretty much all giggle an' gab.

MARIETTA. Will I be?

BOB. You've made a good start, kid.

MRS. BARTLETT. Jonathan, won't you buy the left over ice-cream?

DEACON. Don't want it. Just tastin' it has give me indigestion. Only stopped because I was lookin' for Edna.

EDNA. Did you want me for anything particular?

DEACON. Well, as long as you're close to the center, you'd better run down to Axell's grocery store an' let 'em know about leavin' out that starch from my order this mornin'.

EDNA. But it's so pleasant here. Can't I let them know to-morrow when they come to the house?

DEACON. No. Folks that make mistakes ought to be told of it quick! Tell 'em if they try to cheat me ag'in, I'm through with 'em!

EDNA. Oh, Father, please—I don't like to say that!

DEACON. Are you goin' to obey me, or ain't you?

EDNA. (*Despondently*) Of course, Father. We need some soap, too.

DEACON. Get that at the grocery across the street, that's set up in competition. Let Axell's *see* you gettin' it, too.

EDNA. (*Listlessly*) I haven't enough money for soap.

DEACON. (*Hands her silver piece*) There 'tis. Give me back the change at supper time. Don't forget.

EDNA. Oh, I won't. (*Exits, L.*)

MARIETTA. Supper time, supper time! We're goin' to have ice-cream at supper time! (*Dances*

around.) May I go home, Ma Bartlett, and tell Susie Jane we're goin' to have ice-cream?

MRS. BARTLETT. Yes, run along.

MARIETTA. Ice cream—pink and white and chocalum! Ice-cream, ice-cream! (*Dances around and off R., chanting "Ice-cream."*)

DEACON. Wouldn't let her go dancin' around like that, Cousin Cynthia. Takin' her from the Orphan Asylum ain't goin' to be no credit to you, if you don't bring her up strict.

MRS. BARTLETT. The idea of your instructin' me how to bring up a child, an' me a church member all my life!

DEACON. You don't frown on dancin' the way you used to.

MRS. BARTLETT. Not innocent dancin', no. The world advances, an' I'm tryin' to advance with it—Bob, take that ice-cream freezer over to Mrs. Anderson's an tell her we're much obliged for the loan of it.

BOB. All right, Mom. (*Exits with freezer, at L.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Didn't want to get into an argument with you before Bob, but as long as you've brought up the subject of dancin' yourself, all I want to say is that all the young folks in town are pityin' your Edna.

DEACON. What for?

MRS. BARTLETT. Because you won't let her go to the Saturday Evenin' Club, made up of the town's nicest young folks, on account of bein' afraid she'll dance with some of 'em.

DEACON. I know what I'm doin'. No one can say I ain't been active chasin' the devil in Cosy Corners.

MRS. BARTLETT. Chasin' folks to the devil, you mean. Edna ain't goin' to stand it always. Tryin' to bring her up like she was a sanctimonious old

maid of sixty. How's she goin' to get any pleasure out of life, I'd like to know?

DEACON. Don't you start upholdin' dancin' to me, Cynthia Bartlett. Shouldn't be surprised if you keep on, to see you footin' it someday yourself, forgettin' your standin' in the church.

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, I do dance in spirit now, though havin' too much flesh sort of holds me down in body. An' as for Edna—why, it's natural to all young creatures to want to dance an' frisk. Look at the lambs an' kittens an' puppies! They're all a-dancin' to some secret music of their own. The flowers an' grass are sort of dancin' as they rise up from the earth in Springtime. I wish you'd act more like a human bein', Jonathan, an' let Edna go around with the young folks.

DEACON. Edna's been brought up to respect parental authority an' she's goin' to keep on respectin' it. Don't you think you can dictate to me. I'm goin' to keep a short rope on her for the good of her soul. Next thing I cal'late to do is to stop her runnin' round with that fiddlin' Miss Merrill that's spendin' the summer here. Fiddlin' an' dancin' are pretty nigh first cousins to my mind.

MRS. BARTLETT. There you go again, shuttin' down on poor Edna. When you know she just about worships Miss Merrill. Everybody's fond of Miss Merrill in this town, but you.

DEACON. Don't see any reason why they should be.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, I suppose it began when she offered to play her violin at Mrs. Deacon Platt's funeral, when the church organ broke down.

DEACON. (*Acidly*) That don't pay for her flouncin' around in her fine clothes, makin' other girls take a back seat while she walks off with their beaux.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Triumphantly*) There, Cousin Jonathan, I knew the devil would out if you only gave him time enough. I understand somethin' now that's been botherin' me a good while.

DEACON. What you talkin' about?

MRS. BARTLETT. You didn't have a word to say against Miss Merrill until she began goin' around with the minister. Now, nothin' she says or does is right. You was hopin' Clyde would fall in love with Edna, an' Miss Merrill upset your plans.

DEACON. Plum foolishness!

MRS. BARTLETT. An' it's your plans bein' upset that's turned you against the minister, an' made you balk at everythin' he tries to do to build up the church.

DEACON. Don't you blame *me* because the Lord ain't smilin' on Hollister's pastorate. Look at the church catchin' fire an' almost burnin' down. I believe in signs an' warnin's.

MRS. BARTLETT. Then, if you believe in signs an' warnin's, why didn't you believe the janitor six months ago when he gave us warnin' there'd be a fire some day if that bad spot in the chimney wasn't tended to? That's the kind of signs an' warnin's folks ought to pay attention to.

(*Enter CLYDE, L.*)

CLYDE. Well, Deacon Pettibone, how do you do this afternoon?

DEACON. (*Shortly*) Same as usual, Parson Hollister.

CLYDE. That's good.

DEACON. I didn't say it was "good." I've got rheumatism in my left knee.

CLYDE. Indeed? I'm sorry.

DEACON. I ain't askin' for sympathy.

CLYDE. (*Kindly*) You're welcome to it just the same. (*Exhibits stack of hymnbooks he is carrying.*) Mrs. Bartlett, look at these hymnbooks. I just found them in the ruins, good as new, except for a slight scorch on the sides of one or two of them. I'm going to take them over to the parsonage.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, well, six hymnals will help out quite a little! Don't the Bible say that all things work together for good to those that love the Lord? (*Saying this for the DEACON's benefit.*) That's why we all ought to keep right on smilin' even if we *do* have to hold meetin's in the back room of the parsonage until the church is repaired.

CLYDE. And how about the proceeds from the ice-cream social?

MRS. BARTLETT. Gross receipts, \$18.05.

CLYDE. (*Rubbing his hands*) Well, now, that's quite gratifying!

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Hating to break the news*) But it isn't all profit. We had expenses of eleven dollars leavin' a net clear profit of \$7.05.

DEACON. The Lord ain't prosperin' the cause here for some reason or other.

CLYDE. (*Depressed*) I had hoped that after my strong appeal last Sunday the people of Cosy Corners would turn out in better numbers.

DEACON. There ain't so very many *to* turn out. I was countin' up yesterday, an' you ain't had but five new members in the eight months since you came.

MRS. BARTLETT. All young folks, though—the kind that's to carry on the work when we old ones are out of the way.

CLYDE. (*With a sigh*) I'll admit that it seems up-hill work sometimes.

DEACON. (*Eagerly*) Maybe you think you made a mistake not acceptin' the call to that city church?

CLYDE. No, I have no regrets, Deacon Pettibone. A city church right at the start would have been too great a responsibility for a young theologian like me. I want to build up the church here first, and make my calling and election sure.

DEACON. Well, that's all right if you're sure that while you're tryin' to build up the church, you ain't bein' pulled down spiritually yourself.

CLYDE. Pulled down spiritually? I don't think I quite get what you mean, Deacon.

DEACON. Well, when a young parson standin' up in his pulpit readin' a Bible text catches sight of a young woman comin' into the church an' loses his place right in the middle of a verse, watchin' her swishin' down the aisle—I say it don't look spiritual minded to *me*.

CLYDE. (*Somewhat abashed for the moment*) You—refer to last Sunday, I presume? Well, I *did* lose my place for a moment. The church was in shadow, and when the door opened bringing the sunlight along with Miss Merrill—it was like a bit of rosy springtime bursting into the room. I assure you, Deacon, it was quite worth the embarrassment I experienced in losing my place. Why, the thrill of that vision of beauty inspired me then and there into delivering one of the best sermons I ever preached. Several persons spoke about it afterwards.

DEACON. About your forgettin'?

CLYDE. About my sermon.

DEACON. H'm! What does anybody know about this Merrill young woman anyhow?

CLYDE. (*Defensively*) Why, that she has a charming personality, and is spending the summer at Cosy Corners. She likes Cosy Corners.

DEACON. (*Sarcastically*) What in particular does she like?

CLYDE. Why, I've heard her speak of the church

—the trees—the—the moonlight—yes, only last evening she was admiring the moonlight. (*Gives unconscious sigh of happy recollection.*)

DEACON. Different from New York moonlight. I s'pose. Where has she been, an' what does she do for a livin'?

CLYDE. Why, I don't know.

DEACON. Didn't you ever ask her?

CLYDE. Certainly not.

DEACON. Why not?

CLYDE. (*Losing his temper a trifle*) Because I didn't care to. I considered those matters to be strictly her own business, and not at all yours or mine.

DEACON. (*Angrily*) You needn't fly off at your elders, Parson Hollister.

MRS. BARTLETT. Now, now, do calm down, both of you, an' don't say things you may be sorry for afterwards. Poor Miss Merrill! Why, the last thing on earth she'd want to do would be to make trouble for anybody. Clyde, if not knowin' what Miss Merrill does for a livin' bothers Cousin Jonathan, I'd just as soon ask her myself some time. She couldn't think anythin' of my askin' her, I'm sure—an' me a woman old enough to be her mother. (*Looks off R.*) Gracious me, if there she ain't comin' up the road now!

CLYDE. (*Forgetting everything else at sight of AVIS*) And those youngsters Jim and Harry quarreling about which one is to carry her parasol.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Laughs*) And now my Bob's got it instead!

DEACON. Young fools!

MRS. BARTLETT. We were all foolish once, an' may be again before we get through with it. You never can tell.

AVIS. (*Entering at R. with BOB, who turns and*

shakes his fist at unseen rivals) My poor little parasol! It's a wonder there's enough left of it to hold over my head. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Hollister—Mr. Pettibone? (DEACON *snorts ungracious greeting in reply.*)

CLYDE. Fine, Miss Merrill. And how are you to-day?

AVIS. Almost too happy to live. Cosy Corners has a wonderfully bracing climate.

CLYDE. I'm glad you think so.

AVIS. So am I.

CLYDE. You're looking remarkably well this afternoon.

AVIS. Do I? I mean, am I? (*They look at each other, laugh a bit foolishly, their mutual infatuation quite apparent to everyone.*)

BOB. (*As AVIS takes back her parasol*) I'd offer to treat you to ice-cream, Miss Merrill, only Mom made me take home the freezer a while ago. Dern it!

MRS. BARTLETT. Bob Bartlett! Such language!

AVIS. Thank you, Bob, but I know all about how good that ice-cream was. Mrs. Bartlett, I was your very first customer this afternoon, wasn't I?

MRS. BARTLETT. Yes, an' I'm afraid I was stingy with you for fear the ice-cream wouldn't hold out. I wish I hadn't been now.

BOB. It's a wonder Jim and Harry gave you a chance to eat it, walking on your heels the way they did!

DEACON. Fools!

MRS. BARTLETT. The Lord made *most* men fools, an' I s'pose they *have* to act out their nature.

LIBBIE. (*Heard outside*) Now, Jane—aw, yes. Come on over to my house—you promised!

(Enter LIBBIE dragging JANE, who is half willing, half reluctant.)

JANE. Oh, how do, Bob?

LIBBIE. Hello, Bob!

BOB. (*Rapidly, to get rid of girls, the while keeping his enraptured eyes on AVIS*) Hello, Jane! How do, Libbie? But I saw you once before to-day, you know.

JANE. Oh, did you?

LIBBIE. Well, no harm in saying how do again, is there?

DEACON. (*Cuts into chatter harshly*) You was goin' to ask Miss Merrill somethin', wasn't you, Cynthia?

CLYDE. (*Aside to DEACON, frowning*) There's no hurry about that, is there?

MRS. BARTLETT. Dear me, Jonathan, do let folks set down an' rest themselves a minute first. (*Nervously.*) Let's see—I hope I've got all my dishes packed up in that basket.

AVIS. You wanted to ask me something?

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, I—— (*CLYDE in his uneasiness crumples up piece of cake—the only thing left outside the basket.*) Clyde, you've gone an' ruined that forty-cent piece of cake—all we had left!

CLYDE. Sorry. I—I'll pay for it gladly. Here's a dollar. Forty cents for the cake—sixty to pay damages.

MRS. BARTLETT. All right. Here Libbie, Jane. Come eat this up to save the pieces.

LIBBIE. Oh, isn't that nice?

JANE. Isn't it? (*They proceed to eat cake.*)

BOB. (*Seated at R. by side of AVIS and oblivious to all the world outside*) Miss Avis, I think you're a perfect angel. Even that spot of powder on your nose looks good to me. (*AVIS laughs, produces*

vanity bag, looks in mirror, and dusts powder off her nose.) I had the oddest dream last night!

AVIS. Did you, Bob? What was it?

BOB. I dreamed I was climbing up miles and miles of winding spiral staircase—all made out of your curls!

AVIS. How funny!—What are you staring at? Isn't my hat on straight?

BOB., It's your eyes!

AVIS. (*Seeking to escape so much sentiment*) Oh, er—Mrs. Bartlett, may I ask what it was you were going to ask me?

MRS. BARTLETT. Of course, though 'twasn't anythin' special. Get up a minute an' let *me* sit by Miss Merrill, Bob. (*Bob grudgingly obeys.*) You know in a place like this, Miss Merrill, small an' sort of off the beaten track—an' where everybody knows everybody else, an' all about them—an' where we naturally want strangers to feel at home, why— (*Hesitates for moment, at a loss how to proceed.*)

AVIS. (*With feeling*) Strangers *do* feel at home here. At least I do. Mr. Hollister has been so kind, introducing me around, ever since that day I wandered quite by accident into his church, unknown to anyone. I'll never forget that day, Mr. Hollister!

CLYDE. (*With enthusiasm*) I'll never forget it either, Miss Merrill!

AVIS. And now—why, I couldn't feel more at home anywhere!

CLYDE. We hope it will always seem like that to you here.

DEACON. Well, well, Cynthia, folks has other things to do besides settin' here. If you're goin' to do what you said, why don't you?

CLYDE. Deacon, it is all so trivial—so unnecessary.

DEACON. How do you know it is? Miss Merrill owned up nobody knew her when she come here.

AVIS. Why, what's the matter? Has—has anything happened? Have I done anything to displease anyone? Please tell me if I have.

CLYDE. No, of course not, Miss Merrill.

MRS. BARTLETT. No, indeed! Deacon Pettibone didn't mean anything like that. We was just wonderin'—that is, I thought it would be interestin' to know where you was born—an'—an'——

DEACON. (*Supplying the missing question*) —an' if you're self supportin'.

AVIS. Well, I was born in New York, and, yes, I certainly *am* self supporting.

MRS. BARTLETT. I kind of thought you had that independent air a girl gets from lookin' out for herself.

DEACON. Be you a music teacher?

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Uncasily*) I thought I was attendin' to this, Jonathan.

AVIS. I have taught—a very little.

DEACON. (*Persistently*) Married or single?

AVIS. (*With dignity*) If I were married, Mr. Pettibone, I'd be wearing a wedding-ring.

DEACON. It don't always follow. (*Takes up Avis' parasol and scrutinizes it.*) H'm! Borrowed that parasol from some of your gal friends to come on this trip with, I s'pose?

AVIS. What do you mean? I never borrow parasols. I earn quite enough to buy my own, and this one I selected especially to go with my costume.

DEACON. Sort of odd, when your name is Avis Merrill, that parasol should be marked with the initials C. B. (*AVIS drops handkerchief. DEACON looks at it.*) Handkerchief's marked C. B. too!

AVIS. (*Half laughter, half scornful*) Why, you've missed your profession. You would have made a wonderful detective!

CLYDE. Deacon Pettibone, this catechising cannot be especially pleasant to Miss Merrill, and I object.

DEACON. Well, I object to folks goin' around callin' themselves sometimes one name an' sometimes another. That's why I asked Miss Merrill if she was married, an' as a respectable church worker, I have a right to ask it.

CLYDE. Mr. Pettibone, this is infamous! Miss Merrill, you need not trouble even to answer his accusation! I believe in you—we all believe in you.

AVIS. But you see what he suspects—that I sometimes call myself by a name not my own? Well, it's the truth.

DEACON. I guess I knew what I was talkin' about, Parson.

AVIS. (*To CLYDE*) But, if in spite of that fact, I asked you still to believe in me, Mr. Hollister—could you do it?

CLYDE. (*Takes her hands and looks searchingly into her eyes*) I could—I do!

AVIS. And you, Mrs. Bartlett?

MRS. BARTLETT. I don't understand, but you've got the kind of face I just can't help trustin'.

BOB. Me, too!

LIBBIE. Oh, Jane, I think it's all just too lovely and mysterious for words, don't you?

JANE. Yes, and especially Miss Merrill.

AVIS. Well, then, Mr. Pettibone, so as not to embarrass my friends, let me say that when I came to Cosy Corners, I wanted to avoid being stared at and criticized, and just rest and frolic like any girl, so I gave my real name instead of my professional one, which is Claudia Beresford.

MRS. BARTLETT. What! You are Claudia—the violinist?

AVIS. When I'm not just everyday Avis Merrill.

MRS. BARTLETT. Claudia! Why, my niece in

Boston wrote about your playin' for them operatic concerts their music club's been givin' this past winter, an' makin' the biggest hit of anybody there. She's crazy about you!

LIBBIE. I just knew all along you were something wonderful, Miss Merrill.

JANE. So did I.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, got any more questions to ask, Jonathan?

DEACON. No. Wouldn't have asked what I did 'cept my conscience told me I'd ought to. I'm goin' to drive on down to my hardware store to git some nails. (*Exits L.*)

AVIS. Don't think any more about it, Mrs. Bartlett. I wonder if I can get to the post-office before closing time.

BOB. (*Eagerly*) Do you want me to——

CLYDE. (*Elbows BOB out of the way, gently*) I'm sure you can. May I walk along with you?

AVIS. Yes, indeed. I'll be glad of your company, Mr. Hollister. (*CLYDE and AVIS exit R., chatting about fondness for walking, the lovely day, etc., ad lib.*)

BOB. (*Ruefully, looking off*) Ministers always get the best of everything.

LIBBIE. (*To JANE*) Let's tag along behind them. I'd just love to do my hair the way she does, now I know she's somebody.

JANE. So would I.

LIBBIE. Claudia! How romantic!

JANE. How absolutely thrilling! Libbie, let's hurry!

(*LIBBIE and JANE exit R.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Claudia! An' to think Jonathan wouldn't let us accept her offer to play at church

services for nothin' this summer—— It makes me feel too cheap for words!

BOB. Claudia! No wonder I dreamed about that spiral staircase, and her away up at the top!

MRS. BARTLETT. Come down to earth, here. Take this table back over to Sophie's house an' tell her ma we're much obliged for the loan of it. I'll take the basket, an' when you come back through here, you can bring home my camp chairs. Well, I s'pose we've got everything we want. (*Picks up big basket.*)

BOB. (*His eyes traveling yearningly off R. after AVIS*) Maybe you have everything you want, Mom, but I ain't. (*Picks up table.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, I'm glad the social's over. I guess I'm sort of tired standin' on my feet so long.

(BOB *exits at L.*—MRS. BARTLETT *at R.* *In a moment, MORRIS enters at L., followed by DEACON PETTIBONE.*)

DEACON. Hold on, stranger. Didn't you call out my name?

MORRIS. (*With a laugh*) Perhaps I did, Friend Pettibone.

DEACON. Say, how did you know who I was?

MORRIS. Recognized that old buggy. Thought you'd have fallen for a Tin Lizzie by this time.

DEACON. Buggy suits me. I hate them tricky automobiles. I ain't never seen you before, have I?

MORRIS. (*Laughs*) Well, I doubt if you'll ever see me again. The sight of this God-forsaken mud-hole of a town makes me sick. I dropped off the last train in, and I hope to take the next one out.

DEACON. Wait! I know who you are now! You're that scalawag dancin' teacher that boarded

down to Skunk's Holler about ten years ago, an' run off with Hi Stevens' wife.

MORRIS. What a memory!

DEACON. Did you marry Hi Stevens' wife?

MORRIS. I wasn't born yesterday!

DEACON. What's become of her?

MORRIS. The last I heard, she was headed for the demnition bow wows, and traveling on high.

DEACON. Morris Granby, you're still an unregenerate scamp.

MORRIS. Friend Pettibone, you're still a precious old busy-body.

DEACON. About Hi Stevens' wife, now?

MORRIS. Kindly cut out any further references to the dear, dead past, Deacon. In other words—forget it, as I have.

DEACON. Be you still teachin' dancin'?

MORRIS. Haven't for a thousand years. There's my card. Study it at your leisure. I'm headed for the Cosy Corners Hotel.

DEACON. Hold on, hold on! What's Claudia Beresford's name doin' on your card?

MORRIS. She's one of the half dozen high-class musical celebrities under my management. I dropped off here to see her.

DEACON. She was right here on this spot to an ice-cream social not half an hour ago.

MORRIS. Is that so? Can't understand her spending her vacation in such a place as this.

DEACON. Shinin' up to her, be you?

MORRIS. Attractive though I am, she'd never see me in a thousand years, old dear—I'm here with a contract for next season I'm anxious for her to sign, that's all.

DEACON. (*Cautiously*) Miss Beresford calls herself Avis Merrill 'round this town.

MORRIS. Merrill is her real name. She has a right to use it.

DEACON. Well, as long as her beau don't object, s'pose 'tain't no business of mine.

MORRIS. Ha, ha! So Avis has annexed a boob admirer in Cosy Corners, has she?

DEACON. She's in love with the minister of the Congregational Church, an' he with her, if that's what you mean.

MORRIS. (*Contemptuously*) Bah, that's nothing serious.

DEACON. Mebbe 'tain't, but they act like a couple of mooney fools. He looks at her as if she was the last piece of strawberry shortcake on the plate an' he wanted it. She looks at him as if she was beggin' him to grab her an' eat her up. She ain't at the hotel—she's out walkin' with him.

MORRIS. A minister, eh? H'm! Interesting. I thought she didn't write with much enthusiasm about her next season's tour—What kind of a dub is this minister chap anyway?

DEACON. Not much brains, but good lookin'. He ain't been popular, though, with some of the leadin' church members, the way he's actin' lately. Why, he had a chance of gittin' one of the nicest girls in town—well-off, respectable, an' strict brought up, before that fiddlin' Miss Merrill come here.

MORRIS. Well, the town girl can have him back again ten days from now.

DEACON. (*Eagerly*) How do you know she can?

MORRIS. Because I'll make a few shifts in my plans and begin Miss Merrill's tour a month earlier than I'd intended. That means she's back in New York inside of ten days. Once Avis begins work, she'll forget there ever *was* such a burg as Cosy Corners, minister or no minister!

DEACON. Well, Hollister might get back his standin' if he behaved himself after she'd gone.

MORRIS. Do you think I might run into them if I strolled around a bit?

DEACON. Pretty likely to. (*Following MORRIS as he starts toward R.*) I tell you where they might be. There's a new soda-fountain drug store two blocks from here, an' mebbe—— (*Exits after MORRIS, R., still talking.*)

(*Enter SOPHIE from L., walking rapidly, followed by BOB.*)

BOB. Hold on. Wait a minute, Sophie.

SOPHIE. (*Pauses, and speaks very loftily*) Oh, is that you, Mr. Bartlett? (*Giggles nervously.*)

BOB. No, it's Bob. Say, you must be sore about something, calling me Mr. Bartlett.

SOPHIE. Oh, is that so, Mr. Bartlett? (*Giggles again.*)

BOB. (*Ingratiatingly*) Sophie, why didn't I see you just now when I carried in the table your ma loaned for the ice-cream social?

SOPHIE. Because I saw you first, Mr. Bartlett, from behind the parlor-curtain. As you entered the front door, I went out the back one. Good-bye. (*Starts off R.*)

BOB. Wait, hold on! (*She stops, giggling nervously.*) Gee, but you're mad! What for? Say, what made you stay home from the social?

SOPHIE. (*With exaggerated surprise*) Did you really notice I wasn't there, Mr. Bartlett? I supposed you were too busy staring at Miss Merrill to know whether any other girl was around or not. Not that I care. (*Giggles.*) No, indeed! (*Giggles again.*)

BOB. Well, you giggle as if you did.

SOPHIE. I giggled to keep from sneezing.

BOB. The more you're all fussed up about something, the more you giggle.

SOPHIE. I do not. (*Giggles.*)

BOB. You do so. Gee, you're awful cold to me, Sophie. I wish the ice-cream freezer was here so I could go and warm myself.

SOPHIE. (*Slightly mollified*) Much you care whether I'm cold!

BOB. I care a lot, Sophie.

SOPHIE. Except when Miss Merrill is present.

BOB. (*Mournfully honest*) Yes, except then.

SOPHIE. Indeed! And you own it right to my face! Well, it's nothing but puppy-love, if you want to know it, and *she* knows it as well as I know it, and is just laughing right in your face behind your back, and everyone knows it, and don't you say another word to me again as long as you live! So there! (*Exits, giggling, L.* BOB *exits R., whistling "Sweet Hour of Prayer."*)

(*Enter CLYDE and AVIS at R.*)

CLYDE. Well, they've cleared about everything away but the see-saw. Little Marietta and some other children wanted one early this afternoon, so I allowed them to take that old saw-horse and a plank from the church basement.

AVIS. They must have had loads of fun. I missed so many games like that when I was a child.

CLYDE. But even as a child, doubtless, more than anything else, you wanted to be a musician?

AVIS. (*With mock seriousness*) No, even as a child, I didn't. Shall I tell you the truth? More than anything else I wanted to be a witch and go flying on a broomstick. I tried to induce grandfather's stout cane to carry me over the chimney tops, but it absolutely refused to budge. And how

terribly I wanted to go see-sawing with the other children! But the dear, timid old aunt who brought me up was always afraid I might injure my precious violin arm and would never let me try. Why, even now at the sight of that plank—(*Laughs.*)—that is—if you weren't a dignified minister——

CLYDE. And you, a celebrated violinist—(*Looks around.*) There doesn't seem to be anybody in sight—(*Defiantly*)—no harm in it if there were! At least—if you want to assist with the other end of the board—we can put it in place.

AVIS. Oh, what a lark! (*They put board across the saw-horse, she at one end, he at other.*) Though of course, it would really never do for either of us.

CLYDE. Would you like to see how it balances? Here, I'll hold the board until you're seated.

AVIS. Oh, you needn't be afraid I'm afraid, for I'm not! (*Each sits on an end of see-saw.*)

CLYDE. Then we're off! (*They see-saw gently.*)

AVIS. See-sawing at last! I can hardly believe it! I'm just a little freckle-nosed girl again, and you're a bare-foot boy playing hookey from school. Teacher will stand us in the corner when she finds out, but we don't care.

CLYDE. Speaking of school reminds me I dreamed last night you were a little school-teacher, and I was visiting the school.

AVIS. What a failure I'd make teaching school! I'd know at the start I could never make the big boys afraid of me.

CLYDE. No, they'd be too busy falling in love with you for that. Anybody'd fall in love with big blue eyes like yours! (*He brings see-saw to a stop while AVIS is at highest point.*)

AVIS. (*Mischievously, looking down at him*) It's too bad to spoil it, but my big blue eyes are *green*.

(See-saw sways gently up and down, while both laugh happily.)

CLYDE. Of course they'd all want to walk home with you, but no boy would get a chance to walk home with the little school-teacher, because——

AVIS. Not even the nicest one?

CLYDE. He least of all, because the minister would insist on walking home with the little school teacher himself.

AVIS. *(Stops see-saw while HOLLISTER is at highest point)* Oh, Mr. Hollister, would you?

CLYDE. *(Nods)* If I had to lick every boy in sight!

AVIS. How thrilling! *(Jumps off see-saw, and CLYDE falls off.)* Oh, forgive me, I didn't know it would act like that! *(Continues repentant exclamations.)*

CLYDE. Both legs broken. That settles it. You'll have to stay here quite awhile to console me. *(Gets up, laughing.)*

AVIS. But it is time I was going home. I declare, the sun has almost set!

CLYDE. But it is so seldom I have the chance of a word with you alone. Sit down here a little while, won't you, just to please me?

AVIS. I was dying for the invitation. *(They sit together on one of the benches. CLYDE sighs and gazes at her, sentimentally.)* Why do you sigh like that and look at me so solemnly?

CLYDE. Perhaps because finding out you're a great artist has put such a gulf between us!

AVIS. But if a gulf weren't too deep, a minister might put on his rubber boots and wade across, mightn't he?

CLYDE. If he could afford the boots. *(Both laugh. They are half playful, half serious.)* That letter waiting for you at the post-office was from

your business manager, you told me. That means New York is calling you once more.

AVIS. I've been neglecting business letters, neglecting everything—even my precious violin!

CLYDE. Your violin! I'm going to confess something. I've been frightfully jealous of that instrument.

AVIS. Jealous of a poor old wooden violin that can't speak a word in its own defence?

CLYDE. It can sing alluring songs that make you seem to forget the world. You snuggle it to your throat, rest your cheek against it, caress it with your fingers. I've a suspicion you whisper love messages to it sometimes. Who wouldn't be jealous of a violin?

AVIS. I *am* fond of my violin. My first maestro, old Giuseppe Baldani, willed it to me when he died, and I hope to keep it with me as long as I live.

CLYDE. You'll never be able to guess what knowing you this summer has meant to me, Miss Merrill, and how I shall miss you when you're gone.

AVIS. I'll miss you, too—and everyone. But I hope to come back here next year—perhaps. It's been the very happiest summer of my life!

CLYDE. Has it—really? Oh, but you couldn't—no—it's madness even to—(*Checks himself abruptly.*)—of course, you couldn't.

AVIS. (*Softly*) Couldn't what, Mr. Hollister?

CLYDE. Couldn't ever be tempted to give up a public career—the worship of crowds, for—anything else?

AVIS. That depends. What “anything else” do you mean?

CLYDE. I mean the passionate love, the lifetime loyalty of a chap who— (*Pauses.*) It's unfortunate I happened to look toward the charred timbers of that poor old church just then. It brought

me to my senses. An obscure country minister—I—we'll change the subject, and—Please forgive me, Miss Merrill.

AVIS. (*Softly*) There's nothing to forgive.

CLYDE. I—I mustn't keep you here any longer.

AVIS. Well, I've no conscience at all about keeping *you* here. I haven't been near the church since the fire. I wonder if you'd mind taking me over it—just once—before I leave Cosy Corners?

CLYDE. You mean—now?

AVIS. Yes, now.

CLYDE. Gladly—of course. But it's rather desolate looking—those charred timbers—— (*They exit at L.*)

(*Enter* DEACON PETTIBONE *and* MORRIS, R.)

DEACON. I ain't sure—where's my specs—— (*Puts them on.*) There's your fiddlin' girl an' the Parson now—makin' for the church. Come on!

MORRIS. H'm! I don't want to talk before him. Can't you take him off my hands somehow?

DEACON. I'd jest as soon tackle him to help look for some more hymnbooks in the ruins; an' tell her there's someone waitin' here to see her.

MORRIS. Pettibone, you're a natural born strategist. It's a wonder the world has let you linger in Cosy Corners so long.

(*Enter* EDNA, L.)

DEACON. (*Puts away glasses*) Well, well, Edna, what's kept you down to the Center foolin' around? Why, it's most supper time now!

EDNA. It's a holiday and the grocery only opened up for half an hour. I had to wait.

MORRIS. Why, this isn't little Edna Pettibone I

used to see swinging on your front gate when I lived here?

EDNA. *(Looks inquiringly at MORRIS)* Why, who——

DEACON. Yes, 'tis, but she ain't got time to stop an' meet strangers. Hurry along, Edna. I want supper on the table when I get home, an' I'm comin' as soon as I've seen the Parson about somethin'.

EDNA. I'll get it as fast as I can, Father. But things take time to cook. *(Exits R.)*

MORRIS. Nice looking girl, Deacon, even if you didn't introduce me. I wouldn't have done anything but bite her head off, you know. *(Looks off R.)* They seem to be strolling beyond the church. They'll be out of sight in a minute.

DEACON. I'll ketch up with 'em. *(Exits L.)*

EDNA. *(Enters from R.)* Mr. Granby!

MORRIS. Well, Edna, what is it? *(Rises from bench and goes toward her.)*

EDNA. You won't mention to Father that I was ever in that children's dancing-class of yours, will you? He never knew about it. He thinks my dancing was just a natural gift from the devil!

MORRIS. Of course I won't mention it. I'll never forget how you broke your little savings bank open to pay for your lessons. Do you dance as well as ever?

EDNA. I would if I had the chance. I love it same as I always did. Father won't let me even sit out a dance any more. He seems to grow more strict every day.

MORRIS. Best little dancer in the class, you were.

EDNA. All I care for in this world is dancing and pretty clothes, and I can't have either one; but don't tell father I said so. Good-bye.

MORRIS. Wait a second. Here, take my card. And if you ever want to make a living outside this

town—you could be a professional dancer without half trying.

EDNA. Oh, do you think so? But father would never let me leave Cosy Corners.

MORRIS. Anyhow, there's my card. I might hear of something to your advantage, some day, you know.

EDNA. Thank you. If I could only make my living, I—Mercy! I hope father hasn't looked back and seen me. I—I'll keep this card—and—and—don't forget what you promised—about being on the look-out—will you?

MORRIS. No. You can count on that, little girl.

EDNA. Thank you. (*Exits R.*)

(*MORRIS takes out cigar and lights it, after looking off L. Enter AVIS L.*)

AVIS. Morris Granby! What a surprise! Mr. Pettibone said that someone—— Why, what on earth——?

MORRIS. Young lady, my last three letters regarding next season's contracts failed to bring a reply. I thought I'd show up and see what the trouble was. I've been all over town trying to find you. You're some little will-o-the-wisp!

AVIS. I'm sorry I've been so slow about answering your letters, Morris. It was quite beastly of me, but really, I never meant to put you to any extra trouble on my account. I was having such a lovely time it seemed I just couldn't fasten my mind on next season's work and contracts and all that sort of thing. But I intended writing you to-night—indeed I did—and telling you—well, telling you more about *why* my stay here has been so pleasant. (*Looks off L.*) I wonder what they're talking about. I

thought Mr. Hollister intended following right after me.

MORRIS. Mr. Hollister?

AVIS. Yes. He's a wonderful young minister, Morris. I wish you could hear him preach some-time! And he's so unselfish and sincere, and doesn't seem to realize his great talent at all. Why, I don't think I've ever heard better sermons.

MORRIS. Well, after I'm dead, I may have some spare time for such things, but not now. Er—shall we walk up to your hotel?

AVIS. No, I think we might as well talk here. I'm sure Mr. Hollister will be along directly.

MORRIS. Have you looked at that provisional contract I mailed you?

AVIS. Yes, I glanced it over. It's a better offer than I had supposed you could afford to make me for a couple of years yet.

MORRIS. I'm willing to be generous. You've made good. You've reached a point in the road now you've been struggling for ever since you came under my management as a child. So I'll just sign you up while I'm here, and then——

(DEACON enters, L., followed by CLYDE.)

AVIS. Here's Mr. Hollister now. This is my manager, Mr. Granby, Mr. Hollister.

CLYDE. (*Offers hand*) How do you do.

MORRIS. (*Shakes hands with CLYDE*) How do. Miss Merrill was just speaking of you.

DEACON. (*Peevishly*) I tried to get the Parson to attend to huntin' for hymnbooks, but he showed more interest in what was goin' on here than in savin' money for the church.

AVIS. I'm glad Mr. Hollister was interested in what was going on here. I wanted him to be.

MORRIS. Then it may not be out of place for me to inform him that the contract I'm offering you next season is the chance of a lifetime—easy going and big returns—a trip abroad——

AVIS. But, Morris, there are other things to be considered than easy goings and big returns, and trips abroad and all that—when other things come along for a girl.

MORRIS. You mean—you don't like the contract I'm offering?

AVIS. N—no, but I'm considering another contract—of a different sort.

MORRIS. Blue pencil anything you don't like in this one, Avis—and write in what you want. I'm willing to trust you—and then perhaps one or both of these gentlemen will be willing to witness your signature. Here—I've a fountain pen handy——

DEACON. I'm willin' to witness. Be you, Parson?

AVIS. (*Rejects offer of pen*) Morris, I'm awfully afraid I'm going to disappoint you about that contract—any contract.

MORRIS. Why, to quit the game now would be a horrible mistake—one you'd regret all your life.

CLYDE. (*In low voice to AVIS, hardly conscious of others*) I was carried away by my feelings just now, but we who labor in the Lord's vineyard must often follow difficult roads. What I have to offer may mean poverty, obscurity, struggle, not for the few years while you are young and there's hope ahead, but even in old age and to the end.

AVIS. But the poverty, obscurity, struggle—they'd all be glorified, Clyde, because of the blessedness of sharing them with you!

CLYDE. Think—think again, dearest. I'll not blame you whatever decision you make. Remember, once having chosen, there'd be no turning back.

AVIS. There'll be no turning back. When love

comes knocking at a woman's heart, there's only one answer she can give—Clyde! (*Goes into CLYDE'S arms.*)

(*MORRIS tears up contract and throws the pieces in the air. Starts off R., followed by DEACON.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *February of the following year.*

SCENE: *Dining-room of parsonage, furnished in country style. Door in flat leads into hall, where hat rack is visible. Door up R. leads into kitchen. Door up L. leads into Pastor's study. Part of study interior visible. Door down L. Combination book-case and desk against wall L. Table C. Down R. fireplace with arm chair in front of it. Rockers and other chairs ad lib. To R. of C. door a worn trunk against wall, with "Claudia" printed on side in large letters. Pictures and other furnishings ad lib.*

DISCOVERED: AVIS sitting by table, busily embroidering slipper. Enter AMANDA from kitchen, carrying a flat cake in tin.

AMANDA. (*Displaying flat cake*) Here's the cake you was bakin' for your husban's birthday.

AVIS. (*Looks disappointedly at cake*) Did it fall?

AMANDA. No'm. It never riz.

AVIS. Oh, dear. I *did* think that cake was going to behave. What's the matter with it, Amanda?

AMANDA. I thought of tellin' you you was leavin' out the bakin' powder, but seein' as I only work out for an accommodation—— (*Bell rings.*) Land

sakes, I ain't done nothin' all mornin' but run to answer the bell. People bringin' in bundles for that church rummage sale. (*Opens door disclosing MRS. BARTLETT.*) How do, Mrs. Deacon Bartlett?

MRS. BARTLETT. How do, Amandy.

AVIS. Mrs. Bartlett, I'm so glad it's you! Now I know I've really got back from New York and am at home again.

AMANDA. Land sakes, if bein' here three hours, upsettin' a milk bottle, an' spoilin' a cake ain't enough to make you realize you've got home, I don't see how Mis' Bartlett's comin' here is goin' to do it!

AVIS. Figuratively speaking, I meant, Amanda. Please don't be cross.

MRS. BARTLETT. Avis, seems as if you'd been away five weeks instead of five days—an' with Clyde gone at the same time to that church-workers' conference—— (*Turns to AMANDA.*) 'Mandy, I don't want to keep you out of the kitchen.

AMANDA. I ain't busy more'n usual. What's the news? (*Sits in rocking-chair.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Nothing you Methodists would be interested in, 'Mandy. (*Takes another rocking-chair.*)

AMANDA. I'm willin' to put myself out to hear about Congregationalist troubles any day in the week.

MRS. BARTLETT. Sorry to disappoint you, but I haven't any troubles to tell.

AMANDA. Then mebbe you don't know that while Mr. and Mis' Hollister was away from home, more of that livin'-room ceilin' cracked ready to fall down—right over them benches you're usin' for Sunday School. If you don't get back into your church pretty soon, your scholars'll be comin' over to join us Methodists where they'll feel safe from harm.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Changes chairs again, ignoring AMANDA, speaks to AVIS*) Pleasant day, ain't it?

AVIS. Yes—— (*Looks meaningly toward AMANDA.*) Just a little cloudy—but might be worse. (*AMANDA and MRS. BARTLETT rock.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Shows bundle*) I brought over three bungalow aprons for the rummage-sale. They was give to me last Christmas, an' every last one of 'em is too small.

AVIS. They're sure to be popular at the sale. I do hope we'll raise enough money to replace the Sunday School reading desk that was burned.

AMANDA. I should think you'd be wantin' a Sunday School room to put it in before, you spent money buyin' a desk.

MRS. BARTLETT. Amandy, I just *feel* I'm hinderin' you from your work.

AMANDA. I ain't said you was. (*They rock again.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. As I was sayin', Mrs. Hollister, it's a pleasant day out. Still it does seem to me considerable like thunder an' lightnin'. (*Rocks violently and glares at AMANDA.*) But maybe it only *seems* like that because I smell somethin' burnin'.

AMANDA. (*Starts up in horror*) My beans! Well, 'tain't my fault with folks comin' in all hours of the day interruptin' me. An' bein' as I only work out for an accommodation—— (*Picks up cake and shows it to MRS. BARTLETT en route for door.*) Cake. Flat. Baked it herself. None of my doin's. (*Exits into kitchen.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. I declare, sometimes I don't know which one gets on my nerves the most—Amandy or Jonathan Pettibone. I should think you'd have enjoyed bein' in New York for a spell an' gettin' away from them both.

AVIS. I was so busy taking my stage trunks out

of storage, I didn't have time to think much of anything else. (*Points to trunk.*) I've brought everything I ever owned back with me. I really got homesick for Cosy Corners, and looked forward to train time.

MRS. BARTLETT. *How* I did miss you and Clyde both at last Wednesday night's meetin'! It wasn't a regular prayer service. Mr. Umpstead that's substitutin' over in Firetown delivered a sermon instead, on Deacon Pettibone's invitation—an' of all the poor preachin'—

LIBBIE. (*Putting her head in at door R.*) May Jane and I come in? Amanda was out in the yard, and directed us the kitchen way.

AVIS. I'm glad to see you, Libbie. And Jane, too. (*Girls enter.*)

JANE. We were here yesterday to ask if you'd got home. We're awfully glad you're back again, aren't we, Libbie?

LIBBIE. I should say we were. (*Displays an old bird cage she has brought with her.*) Here's a bird-cage we haven't any more use for at home. I brought it for the rummage sale. It's all right except the seed-cup and the door.

AVIS. Thank you. (*Takes cage.*) I hope somebody has a bird that'll just fit it. I can regild it myself.

JANE. (*Produces diary*) I'm contributing this book. It's a diary.

AVIS. That's nice. (*Takes book.*)

JANE. I used it up to January eleventh and then I couldn't think of any more to write. It's all blank pages after that.

LIBBIE. Dear me, it does seem good to sit down and rest my feet. I'm terribly tired!

MRS. BARTLETT. Tired? Why a girl your age oughtn't to know she *has* any feet. Wait till you're

married an' have to run your legs off doin' house-work.

LIBBIE. But Jane and I aren't ever going to get married, are we; Jane?

JANE. Never, because our friendship for each other is simply ideal. We just hate boys, both of us, and always will.

LIBBIE. We'd rather go with each other to picnics and things than with a tiresome boy any time.

JANE. Boys are nothing but rude and insignificant animals.

LIBBIE. And we just scorn their very existence.

MRS. BARTLETT. My, my! Avis, just give them two goslin's a few more months, an' all the boys in town will have to run to get away from 'em!

JANE. Why, Mrs. Bartlett, how can you say such a thing? I think we'd better be going, Libbie. (*JANE and LIBBIE rise.*)

AVIS. Don't hurry away. The rummage sale is set for next Saturday. We can talk about that.

LIBBIE. Well, you see, Mrs. Hollister, we can't stay anyhow because we haven't finished our hike.

JANE. We have a mile more to do, but we just couldn't pass the parsonage without stopping to see you.

LIBBIE. Because next to each other, we love you, Mrs. Hollister. Don't we, Jane?

JANE. Umhm.

LIBBIE. And we hope Mr. Hollister will preach in Cosy Corners forever and forever.

AVIS. My husband will feel complimented when I tell him that.

JANE. What do you think we took along with us on our hike?

AVIS. Sandwiches?

LIBBIE. No, indeed—something educational—an almanac.

JANE. It's just full of important facts.

LIBBIE. Every time we sat down to rest we made it a rule to commit one fact to memory, didn't we, Jane?

JANE. Conscientiously.

AVIS. Do tell us some of the facts—we'd like to share them with you.

JANE. Go on—tell one, Libbie.

LIBBIE. No, you.

JANE. I can't seem to think of any right now!

LIBBIE. Being asked so sudden and everything—

JANE. Oh, I remember one—an important one, too!

MRS. BARTLETT. (*In undertone*) I was afraid this would happen.

JANE. It comes under the chapter headed "Help in case of accidents." It says dash cold water over a person struck with lightning—so if Libbie ever is, I'll know what to do. Well, good-bye.

LIBBIE. Good-bye.

AVIS. Don't forget the rummage sale.

JANE and LIBBIE. We won't! (*They exit, c.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Goin' back to the subject we was talkin' about, I didn't want to tell you first thing I got in, Avis, but Deacon Pettibone day before yesterday backed out of loanin' the buildin' committee money to go on with buildin' operations, an' the builders have quit work.

AVIS. Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that! It will be an awful blow to Clyde. Couldn't the builders be induced to go ahead and give us time on the payments?

MRS. BARTLETT. The trouble is they need considerable cash for supplies right at the start. Jonathan promised the loan—he'd ought to when he's the richest man in Cosy Corners—but he says now that if your husban' hasn't influence enough to raise the

money from the congregation, it's a sign the Lord don't want him here; an' Clyde gettin' more an' more popular with the young folks every day! It just makes me so wrathful with Cousin Jonathan I feel like pullin' his whiskers an' hearin' him yell for mercy!

AVIS. How much money would it take to persuade the builders to go ahead?

MRS. BARTLETT. About five hundred dollars, the contractor said. There, there, don't pucker up your pretty forehead worryin' about it.

AVIS. I'm thinking of Clyde. I really believe Deacon Pettibone is trying to force him to resign before his year is out. Why is he so against my husband, I wonder?

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, for one thing, he ain't a prospective son-in-law an' Mr. Umpstead—bein' a widower—might be. An' if the minister was Jonathan's son-in-law, he could run the church pretty much to suit himself. Runnin' the Cosy Corners Church seems about as important to Jonathan Pettibone as gettin' elected President an' runnin' the United States might seem to somebody else.

AVIS. Mrs. Bartlett, if I weren't a minister's wife and didn't think it wicked to call names, I'd tell Deacon Pettibone to his face that he was nothing but a miserable, spiteful, persecuting, selfish old spider—so there! But of course, I mustn't lose my temper.

MRS. BARTLETT. No, nor me either. Darn Deacon Pettibone anyhow! (*Slight pause.*)

AVIS. I'd just like to let him know there are other ways of getting money than borrowing from him.

MRS. BARTLETT. Old Mr. Carey might let us have it—he's the second biggest tax-payer in Cosy

Corners, but he's so sick nobody's allowed even to see him.

AVIS. Mrs. Bartlett, don't say anything about this to anyone, but I had the offer of an engagement while I was away, to play in a high class vaudeville theatre in New York, and as it happens it's the very week Clyde will be away on that College Lecture trip. I turned the offer down, of course, but a letter followed me making a still better offer, and—well, it seems almost like fate. If I only dared take the chance of Clyde's forgiving me for it afterwards!

MRS. BARTLETT. Forgivin' you? I don't see why he shouldn't. There's nothin' wicked about violin playin', or my niece in Boston wouldn't have had you for her music club.

AVIS. But Clyde's sort of jealous of my music. Yes, he is. He owns it himself. He doesn't even like me to practice for fear I'll be tempted back to public life. He says he feels sometimes like shooting holes in my violin. Of course he always laughs when he says it—but there's a fiery flash behind the laugh. It may be that far-off strain of Italian blood in Clyde that makes him jealous—the same emotional something that goes into his sermons and makes them almost sweep you off your feet. But, oh, how I should love to put the money in his dear hands and say, "There, just wave that under Deacon Pettibone's nose and ask him how he likes the perfume of it." Eh, Mrs. Bartlett?

MRS. BARTLETT. Avis, I believe if Providence intends for that buildin' money to come from your playin', you'll find that Clyde won't be allowed to stand in the way of it. An' if you want my advice, it's this—think it over—an' meantime be pickin' out your stage clothes—the ones you'd wear if you decide to go. (*Rises.*)

AVIS. I haven't very long in which to make up my mind. I had intended to write and reject their offer again to-day.

MRS. BARTLETT. Don't you do it. Sort of sound Clyde—from a distance like—before you do. An' listen. Next time I come over, I want to see you in one of your concert dresses—an' see you stand up an' play in it—the way you did in Boston, an' the way you will if you take that vaudeville engagement.

AVIS. That's very simple, if it would give you any pleasure, Mrs. Bartlett.

MRS. BARTLETT. It would—an' I'm just goin' to hope you'll see your way clear to earnin' that five hundred dollars.

AVIS. You're a darling! (*Kisses MRS. BARTLETT.*) Keep on hoping and hoping hard. (*Shows MRS. BARTLETT to door and opens it, disclosing SOPHIE in the act of ringing the bell.*)

SOPHIE. Oh, how do, Mis' Bartlett.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Rather distantly*) How do you do, Sophie Anderson? (*She exits.*)

AVIS. Well, well, Sophie, I suppose that bundle means *you* have brought something to the rummage sale.

SOPHIE. Yes, it's grandma's winter coat. It has a few moth-holes in it, but it's very good material.

AVIS. All right, dear. I'll undo it after awhile, when I begin to arrange things for the sale.

SOPHIE. I'm glad you're back from New York—Did you notice how offish Mrs. Bartlett acted with me when I spoke to her?

AVIS. Why, no, and if she did, it's only because she had other things in her thoughts just then. You don't mind my going on with embroidering this slipper, do you? (*Takes up embroidery again.*)

SOPHIE. Not at all. Excuse me, and I suppose you'll think it's gush, but I do think you're the sweet-

est girl that ever lived! I don't wonder Bob used to be in love with you—We've had an awful quarrel since you've been away.

AVIS. (*Abstractedly*) Five hundred dollars.

SOPHIE. What?

AVIS. Excuse me, dear, I was thinking of something else for a moment.

SOPHIE. Do you and Mr. Hollister have quarrels?

AVIS. (*With dignity*) My husband doesn't believe in quarrels. He's a minister.

SOPHIE. Bob and I aren't even on speaking terms. (*Giggles.*)

AVIS. It's nothing serious, though, Sophie. You're giggling!

SOPHIE. I always giggle when my heart is breaking.

AVIS. (*Thinking of the church*) Money is so terribly necessary in this world of ours.

SOPHIE. But money has nothing to do with it!

AVIS. (*With a start*) Nothing to do with what?

SOPHIE. My quarreling with Bob. It's all his mother's fault.

AVIS. (*Trying to take an interest and embroidering nervously*) How can that be?

SOPHIE. She doesn't like our going together because we're both so young. And Bob is just scared to death of her, and when I told him last Sunday that since he was such a scaredy calf, we'd better be nothing but the merest acquaintances from now on, he was heartless enough to say "There are others."

AVIS. You mustn't let trifling squabbles spoil your and Bob's happiness. Why, I wouldn't have the least little shadow come between Clyde and me for the world! (*Bell rings.*) That's his ring now! He must have forgotten his key. Oh, let me hide

these slippers! Thank heaven I've finished them.
(*Runs off L.*)

SOPHIE. (*Calls off to AVIS*) Good-bye, I'm going out the kitchen way. (*Runs into AMANDA entering from kitchen.*) Oh, excuse me, did I jar you?
(*Exits R.*)

AMANDA. Snapped a rib right in two, an' if I wasn't workin' out just for an accommodation——
(*Opens door, admitting CLYDE.*)

CLYDE. Good morning, Amanda.

AMANDA. Good afternoon. It's dinner time an' ready to put on the table.

CLYDE. Well, I'm hungry as a wolf. (*Sets down satchel and takes off hat.*) Where's Mrs. Hollister?

AVIS. (*Enters at L.*) Here I am. Oh, it seems ages since I saw you last! (*Runs into his arms.*)

CLYDE. Centuries!

AMANDA. Such gushin'! Dinner's been all ready for half an hour, Mr. Hollister.

CLYDE. Is that so? I'm sorry my train couldn't be persuaded to get in ahead of time. Nothing would have pleased me better.

(*AMANDA exits at R.*)

AVIS. Was there a good attendance at the Church Workers' Convention?

CLYDE. Fine. It was all very inspiring. Did you have a good time in New York?

AVIS. Except for the visit to the storage-house. A storage-house always seems to me a kind of vault for dead furniture, dead belongings, and dead hopes. I was glad to rescue my stage clothes and bring them all to Cosy Corners with me.

CLYDE. Although you'll have no use for such things here. Thank heaven the public has no claim on you now!

AVIS. I—I'll put some of my old hats and things in the rummage sale. They're out of style now and too giddy for a minister's wife anyhow.

CLYDE. (*AMANDA, during their conversation, passes in and out, setting tea-service, chicken-pie, beans, bread, etc., on the table*) I met Mrs. Bartlett down street. I was sorry to hear the building had come to a standstill.

AVIS. Yes, the only thing that has moved is the plastering there in the living-room. It's cracked again. But everything's got to come out right somehow—church and all!

CLYDE. My little comforter! How did I ever live without you?

AMANDA. (*Disapproving of threatened embrace between CLYDE and AVIS, sets down chair with a bang, making them both jump back with a start*) Well, as long as dinner's ready, I don't see any sense in your standin' up there. (*AVIS and CLYDE sit, and AMANDA takes her stand back of table.*)

AVIS. I forgot about dinner.

CLYDE. Sorry to have kept you waiting, Amanda.

AMANDA. Well, ain't we goin' to have grace an' Bible verses?

CLYDE. (*As he and AVIS bow heads reverently*) "Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

AVIS. (*In subdued tones*) "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

AMANDA. (*In tone of extreme severity*) "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness." (*Joins quotation to her personal remarks in same tone, and without a pause.*) This side-dish is some of Mis' Hollister's cookin' an' she calls it "toad in a hole."

AVIS. (*Explains to CLYDE*) But it really has nothing to do with toads, dear. It's beefsteak cuttings.

CLYDE. (*After he is served, begins to eat*) This sharp weather has given me a splendid appetite. Have you tasted this toad in a hole, Amanda?

AMANDA. Yes. It tasted to me consid'rble as if the toad had crawled into a hole an' died. (*CLYDE and AVIS hastily put down knives and forks in annoyance at AMANDA'S words.*)

CLYDE. I hope you didn't burn those precious little hands of yours again over the cook stove.

AVIS. I didn't.

CLYDE. Are you quite sure now? Let me see. (*AVIS extends both hands across table. CLYDE looks at them and is about to kiss them when AMANDA gives a thump on the table with her fist.*)

AMANDA. H'm! (*Hands a cup to CLYDE as he and AVIS separate hastily.*) That ain't the usual kind of coffee, but it's Mis' Hollister's orders.

AVIS. (*Sweetly*) Not my order—my suggestion, Amanda. (*To CLYDE.*) Your sermons are such a tax on your brain, dear, and I read in the paper that coffeeteen assists the intellect. But if you don't care for it——

CLYDE. (*Tastes contents of cup, grimaces horribly, and almost chokes*) My wife, I never tasted anything like it!

AMANDA. Well, if there's any objection to the way I make coffee——

AVIS. But there isn't. We only care for coffee-teen occasionally.

CLYDE. Yes, Amandy, occasionally is quite sufficient.

AMANDA. It ain't so much that I'm thinkin' about the coffee, as it is that I'm contemplatin' the fact that this is the first place in my life I was ever so

demeaned as not to set down an' eat with the family, an' bein' as I only work out for an accomodation——

CLYDE. (*Interrupts with smooth dignity*) That's all, Amandy. If we want anything else, we'll call for it.

AVIS. Yes, don't trouble yourself, Amandy.

AMANDA. (*Makes CLYDE and AVIS jump again as she slaps table for emphasis*) Yes, I will. Bein' a good Methodist, I always try to do my duty *even* in the home of a Congregationalist. (*Exits R.*)

AVIS. Now, it does seem a pity, doesn't it, that since it is your birthday, and you came home to find Amandy cross and everything, you didn't have any nice comfy slippers to put on? Don't you think so?

CLYDE. My shoes *are* a trifle damp.

AVIS. Shut your eyes tight, tight, *oh* so tight.

CLYDE. You're acting very mysteriously, you little witch! What's it all about?

AVIS. You'll soon find out. Don't peek, and don't dare flutter an eyelash till I count three. (*Reaches inside door L. and gets slippers. As she does so AMANDA enters carrying the flat cake to show to CLYDE. AVIS drops slippers, snatches the cake, carries it out in kitchen. As AMANDA goes into kitchen again, AVIS hastily re-enters and gets slippers.*)

CLYDE. Well, well, what are all these preparations? The suspense is getting to be awful!

AVIS. (*With a slipper in each hand, holding them up before him*) One, two, three.

CLYDE. (*Opens eyes, and exclaims with great appreciation*) Slippers!

AVIS. (*Down on knees beside him, explains enthusiastically*) I embroidered them all myself. Aren't they darling? Do you like them? Amandy couldn't do as well, could she? See all the little holes in my finger where the needle slipped!

CLYDE. Blessed, busy little finger—what a shame!
(*Kisses finger. She sits in his lap.*)

AVIS. How do you like the design, Clyde?

CLYDE. Why, what is it?

AVIS. It's a conventionalized sea-serpent chasing a mermaid. There wasn't room enough for both on one slipper, so I put the sea serpent on one foot and the mermaid on the other. (*They embrace with laughing childish abandon.*)

CLYDE. They're wonderful, dear. What can I say pretty enough to thank you? (*They go back to table.*)

AVIS. Nothing, because I know all your pretty speeches backward by heart. Just let me see you wear them when you want to be comfy studying your sermons, and that will be all the thanks I want. (*Instinctively they bend to kiss one another across the table. AMANDA enters at door R., coughs harshly, and they start apart, looking down as if contemplating dish.*)

AMANDA. Well, what's the matter?

CLYDE. (*Looking at dish more closely*) After all, the beans are not *much* burned.

AVIS. (*Same manner*) Sure enough, they're not.

AMANDA. (*Severely*) Maybe it's the beans, but it looked considerable to me as if you an' your wife was goin' to kiss each other.

CLYDE. (*Defiantly*) Well, is there anything reprehensible in that?

AMANDA. I was brought up a strict Methodist, an' I never did believe in young married folks bein' too familiar with each other. (*Produces newspaper, post card and letter.*) Mail just come. Biff Perkins brought it. (*Hands paper to CLYDE.*) Congregationalist. Looks thinner every week, like it was goin' in a decline or somethin'. (*Hands post card to AVIS.*) Says your dressmaker can't come till week

after next. (*Hands letter to CLYDE.*) Looks like a store bill when you hold it up to the light. Well, if you're through, I'll clear the table. I've got mincemeat to chop for the refreshment table at that rummage sale.

CLYDE. Well, I suppose an hour's meditation in my study on next Sunday's sermon wouldn't be a bad idea. Please see that I'm not disturbed, Amandy. (*AVIS and CLYDE rise from table.*)

AMANDA. (*To herself, as she clears table*) If I'd ever thought I'd reached my time of life and found myself choppin' mince-meat in the kitchen of a Congregationalist—But seein' as I only work out for an accommodation, I s'pose I'd ought not to complain. (*Exits R., with tray and dishes.*)

AVIS. Amandy's positively rude. I'm afraid I haven't much discipline. And I'm not a good cook and all-round capable as I should like to be. Playing the violin—that seems all I was ever good for.

CLYDE. (*Refers to slippers*) But haven't you just shod me with fresh inspiration?

AVIS. But I want to do more. I wish I could harness my musical knowledge some way to make it help out with your problems—really help.

CLYDE. Just to have you here, Avis, and to know you belong to me is help enough. You're right inside my heart, and I've shut and locked the door.

AVIS. Clyde, I want to ask you something—Suppose a woman determined to carry out a certain course of conduct unbeknown to the man she loved, but that she felt was for his good. Could he forgive her after he found out what her motives had been?

CLYDE. (*Amused*) What's this? Some kind of a puzzle, or have you been reading another of those problem novels?

AVIS. Of course, I didn't mean wicked or horrible deceit, Clyde, but just keeping the man in the dark so he wouldn't object to her accomplishing something big and wonderful for his sake.

CLYDE. Nothing big and wonderful was ever accomplished by deceit. It's an ugly word, no matter how we may try to disguise its meaning. I don't like to hear my little wife plead for it in any form.

AVIS. I—I wasn't pleading—it was just supposing a case, you know.

CLYDE. (*Kindly*) Yes, of course, I know. I wasn't finding fault—and after all, you have supplied me the text of next Sunday's sermon. "The House Built Upon the Sands." (*In ministerial manner.*) No matter how fair a mansion love may build, if it rests upon a foundation of deceit, it must fall to pieces like a house built upon the sands.

AVIS. But I didn't mean a foundation of deceit, you know—just a few shingles.

CLYDE. (*Laughs*) Hereafter I censor that library fiction you bring home. That settles it! (*Goes to study.* AVIS stands in thoughtful silence for a moment, gives a little sigh of resignation, and puts on her hat and coat.)

AMANDA. (*Comes in and starts to remove white table-cloth, replacing it with colored spread*) H'm! Spot on the table-cloth! Soon as I put on a clean one, somebody spills a spot—— Deacon Pettibone's standin' down on the corner talkin' to Mis' Anderson. I s'pose he's headin' for here.

AVIS. Well, please remember Clyde said he didn't wish to be disturbed. (*Bell rings.*)

AMANDA. (*Resentfully*) There goes the bell!

AVIS. I'm going out this way to market. I don't feel like seeing the Deacon just now. (*Exits hastily, R.*)

AMANDA. (*Talking after her retreating form*)

I'm just a rack of bones from tendin' to ev'rythin'—an' seein' as I only work out for an accommodation—(*Admits DEACON at c.*) Good mornin', Deacon. Did you want to see Mr. Hollister or Mis' Hollister, because you can't see neither one?

DEACON. Parson ain't home?

AMANDA. In his study. Whether the ceilin' is goin' to fall down on him or not, he goes right on gettin' his sermons ready. Mis' Hollister is gone to market. Do you want to look at the livin' room ceilin'?

DEACON. Mebbe I'll look at it, an' mebbe I won't. Like as not all of it's fell down that's a-goin' to. No use spendin' the church's money on vanities.

AMANDA. I've got to get back to my work. Are you cal-latin' to set here all alone?

DEACON. You ain't objectin' to my restin' myself a minute, be you?

AMANDA. No, 'tain't nothin' to me one way or t'other. There's Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" if you want to look at it.

DEACON. Pack of lies!

AMANDA. (*Picks up another book*) Mebbe you'd like "Rules for Daily Conduct."

DEACON. I make my own rules.

AMANDA. Well, then, there's the Bible. You ain't objectin' to the Bible, be you?

DEACON. When it's fine print enough to put your eyes out—yes, I be. (*Bell rings.*)

AMANDA. That bell's been ringin' this whole blessed afternoon, an' bein' as I only work out for an accommodation—— (*Opens door c.*)

MORRIS. (*In doorway*) Is Mrs. Hollister in?

AMANDA. (*Snappishly*) No, nor her husban' either. Be you a book agent?

MORRIS. (*Steps inside*) I'm not, fair maiden, do I look like one?

AMANDA. Yes, you do, consid'rble. I don't want to get my life insured, if that's it.

MORRIS. I don't blame you. You're likely to live *another* sixty years without it.

AMANDA. What?

MORRIS. Well, if there isn't my old friend, Deacon Pettibone! I'll have speech with you in a minute or two if I may, Deacon, in Mrs. Hollister's absence.

AMANDA. You can't sell *him* anything either.

MORRIS. What a reader of character you are!

DEACON. So it's you, Granby. Bad pennies always turn up. Where'd you come from?

MORRIS. Drove over from Springfield where one of my attractions is playing. Talk about dusty roads—— (*As AMANDA starts for kitchen.*) Wait a moment, charming Isabella. Do you happen to have such a thing in the country as a whisk broom?

AMANDA. No, Mr. Waggletongue. We brush *our* clothes with a curry-comb. (*Points at floor.*) Just look at all that dirt you've dragged in. I don't know which *is* the most pestiferous around a house—men or red ants! (*Exits R.*)

DEACON. Didn't s'pose you'd ever turn up here again, seein' the Parson married your fiddlin' girl.

MORRIS. This was intended simply as a friendly call on the turtle doves. You're doing all you can to make Cosy Corners a bed of roses for them, I suppose?

DEACON. No, I ain't. I'm doin' all I can to show Hollister he ain't the man for the place, because I consider it my religious duty.

MORRIS. My dear old shining-light, duty always came first with you! But Mrs. Hollister—she seems happy, doesn't she?

DEACON. She went to New York last week purpose to bring back everythin' she didn't fetch along

when she was married. I s'pose she's happy as long as Hollister holds his job.

MORRIS. So she kept it under her bonnet—what she really went for, and said it was to get her trunks?

DEACON. Eh? What you talkin' about, Granby?

MORRIS. (*Half to himself*) After all, her methods don't surprise me. Avis is too tender-hearted to make the break and leave Hollister all at once. But she can't put it off very long.

DEACON. I'm glad I ran into you, Granby. You say Mis' Hollister intends to leave the parson? No, no, you're wrong. She's all wrapped up in him.

MORRIS. Green fields and running brooks and gently ambling country sermons—they might hold some women, but not one with red blood—the genius—the temperament of Avis Merrill. I gave her just about three months in which to kick over the traces, and, by Jove, my hunch was all to the good. Welcome back to the fold, Claudia! (*CLYDE opens study door, silently, and stands listening, unseen.*) I knew it meant chucking Hollister and returning to the concert stage—that it was only a question of a few weeks, perhaps days—as soon as I heard she had played that concert while in New York!

CLYDE. (*Advancing into room*) Mr. Granby— (*MORRIS turns with surprised exclamation.*) I beg your pardon—but were you speaking of my wife's having played a concert in New York?

MORRIS. Why, my dear Hollister—I'm sorry if I've let the cat out of the bag. I didn't know you were around. The Deacon is to blame—he got me talking. But perhaps Avis is breaking into the game again *with* your permission?

DEACON. Always thought a fiddlin' girl wa'nt suited to marryin' a parson.

MORRIS. Frankly, I came over from Springfield in the hope of persuading the little woman to go out

again under my management. I'll tell you what, Hollister, if you've taken a sensible view of the thing, and resigned to it—and are tired of the proposition here in Cosy Corners the same as she is—why, I might make a place for you in her company. Advertising agent—the box office——

DEACON. 'Twouldn't be a bad idea, Hollister. Not a bad idea at all. Because folks fail at preachin' the gospel ain't no sign they're goin' to fail at everythin' else.

CLYDE. I thank you both for kindly offering to run my affairs for me, but I really prefer to run them without your assistance. As to my wife's having played in public while she was in New York, you are misinformed. She did not even have her violin along with her, and I'm sure, Mr. Granby, you have nothing to say that would interest her any more than it has interested me. I think I shall finish writing my sermon out here, gentlemen, if I'll not be disturbing you in any way.

MORRIS. You're deuced polite with your impoliteness, Hollister.

DEACON. Kickin' us out, be you—an' me a Deacon in the church!

MORRIS. I'll postpone my little talk with Avis until some other time.

CLYDE. That is extremely advisable. Good afternoon.

MORRIS. Good afternoon. (*Takes newspaper from pocket.*) By the way, you might like to look over the New York paper—the one describing the concert where Mrs. Hollister played. No? Then I'll leave it right here on the table. Perhaps Avis would like to look at it herself. Good day.

(DEACON and MORRIS exit C. CLYDE takes up paper, but hesitates about looking at it. Phone rings.)

CLYDE. (*At phone*) Hello. Yes, Mr. Hollister speaking. Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Carey? I'm sorry to hear that—Indeed I will. I'll be there inside of an hour—the next car over from here. Keep up hope if you can. He may pull through yet. Dark hours come to us all—and we must face them as bravely as we can. (*Goes into study, taking paper with him.*)

AMANDA. (*Enters, kitchen door, followed by EDNA PETTIBONE and little MARIETTA*) Well, Edna, I s'pose it's all right you an' Mis' Hollister bein' such friends, but seems like you'd oughtn't to come here so much when your father don't approve of it. I believe in children honorin' their parents no matter if 'tain't easy to do it.

MARIETTA. (*Prancing from kitchen door up to EDNA and AMANDA*) Oh, are you childrens, Edna? I thought you was grown up.

AMANDA. Where'd you come from? I didn't see you taggin' in after us.

MARIETTA. (*Close at EDNA's side, eyes AMANDA accusingly*) People oughtn't to speak cross to orphans, ought they, Edna?

AMANDA. Don't you make up one of them orphan faces at me the way you do to Cynthia Bartlett, comin' in without knockin' an' askin' whether you're wanted or whether you ain't!

EDNA. Marietta bounced out of Mrs. Bartlett's yard as I was passing. We shan't stay long, either of us.

MARIETTA. I bounced out because I wanted to see where you was goin'.

AMANDA. Well, you saw, didn't you? Now you'd better bounce home again.

MARIETTA. Don't want to, 'cause I want to see where she's goin' next. What you been cryin' about, Edna?

AMANDA. Little girls shouldn't show so much curiosity. (*To EDNA, with great interest.*) What *have* you been cryin' about, Edna?

EDNA. Mrs. Hollister will be here soon, Amandy?

AMANDA. She'd ought to be. She only went to market.

EDNA. (*Exhibits bundle she is carrying*) I brought over something for the rummage sale—a dress I've outgrown.

MARIETTA. Edna, are you an' old Mr. Umpstead goin' to be married?

EDNA. (*Shuddering*) Oh, Marietta!

AMANDA. Land sakes, child, stop askin' questions—— You can answer her before me just as full as you're a mind to.

MARIETTA. Edna, are you goin' to marry old Mr. Umpstead?

EDNA. I'd rather die!

MARIETTA. Oh, just wait till I tell that to Libbie an' Jane!

AMANDA. What have they got to do with it, the little snips?

MARIETTA. I heard Libbie sayin' to Jane that Edna was goin' to marry Mr. Umpstead, an' Jane sayin' to Libbie, wasn't it awful Edna's father pickin' out Edna's beaux, an' Sophie Anderson said Edna wouldn't never marry anybody but Charlie Bradbury—an' then they chased me away.

EDNA. It's common gossip everywhere, and I hate it!

MARIETTA. Wish somebody would give me a cookie to eat.

AMANDA. There ain't nobody goin' to, so you'd better run along now, an' let Mis' Bartlett know you ain't been kidnapped or anythin'.

MARIETTA. But nobody kidnaps orphans, 'cause who would pay the reward?

AMANDA. Well, Lord knows *I* wouldn't, if 'twas *some* orphans I could mention!

MARIETTA. Wish somebody *would* give me a cookie to eat—Oh, 'Mandy, you snapped your jaws then just like our Fido does bitin' fleas! What made you?

AMANDA. I'm goin' to get back to my mince-meat. I never felt so much like choppin' somethin' in my life! (*Exits R. into kitchen.*)

AVIS. (*Enters door c.*) Well, Edna dear!

MARIETTA. Oh, there's Mrs. Hollister now. I'm goin' out an' watch 'Mandy chop. (*Winningly, as she exits R.*) Wish somebody *would* give me a cookie——

AVIS. I'm glad to see you, Edna.

EDNA. I got the souvenir postal from New York. It was nice to think you remembered me.

AVIS. How has everything been going?

EDNA. I made an excuse to bring this over to the sale so I could tell you. Father tore up a letter that came from Charlie Bradbury yesterday before I'd a chance to open it. I'd promised to write when I got his address, and now I don't even know where it is!

AVIS. Charlie will write again. That's the kind of live boy he is. Just you wait!

EDNA. And maybe father will get hold of the letter again. He's doing everything in his power to break me up with Charlie and force me to marry Mr. Umpstead, and I'm just scared to death!

AVIS. But he can't make you marry anyone against your will.

EDNA. Sometimes I'm afraid he can. Father has always bossed me around—and—and—oh, sometimes I don't think anybody can be in his right mind that is as cruel as he is. He—Oh, Mrs. Hollister, he never did such a thing when I was little—but in the

past six months, he's struck me twice—with the buggy whip!

AVIS. Edna—you poor child! Why, that's outrageous! You mustn't submit to such a thing!

EDNA. I don't think he realizes how terrible it is—the pain. At the thought of it, I—I just haven't the strength to stand up for myself! Mrs. Hollister, what I wanted to ask you was this—Rather than marry an old man I hate, wouldn't it be better for me to run away from home and take a good position I've been offered?

AVIS. A good, safe position with people you know, Edna?

EDNA. Well, it's different from anything anybody would ever expect I knew how to do—but, oh, I can't tell even you just *what* it is, for fear of its getting back to father!

AVIS. But Edna dear, I can't advise you until I know what you have in mind.

EDNA. Well, I—I—you see, I promised not to breathe it to a soul.

AVIS. But, whoever asked you to make such a promise?

CLYDE. (*Enters from study*) Am I interrupting a private conversation?

EDNA. (*Nervously*) Oh, not at all, Mr. Hollister. I just brought something for the sale. I'll see you again, Mrs. Hollister. Soon. Good-bye. (*Exits c.*)

AVIS. (*Thoughtfully*) I'm very sorry for Edna Pettibone. She's so unhappy in her home!

CLYDE. (*With a bitterness not entirely concealed*) Surely you are not so happy in your own home, Avis, that you can afford to waste your pity on other people?

AVIS. Yes, I am—happy as possible—almost. That is, I *would* be if it weren't for the disagreeable

things that worry me because they worry you—like the builders stopping work on the church, and all that. (*Goes and sits on arm of his chair.*) Clyde, you can't imagine how homesick I was to see you while I was trotting around in great big indifferent old New York! Even a beautiful bargain hat I bought didn't console me, except for a quarter of a second.

CLYDE. (*Accepts her caress without returning it*) Homesick to see me? That has a pleasant sound. By the way, you didn't take your violin with you, did you?

AVIS. Yes, I did. I've carried it with me on journeys for so many years—I thought it might be sort of company for me this time, though I suppose that sounds silly to you. (*CLYDE rises, gets his hat and puts it on.*) Are you going somewhere, dear?

CLYDE. (*Looking at watch*) Yes. It's almost time for that hourly car to Southfield. Mrs. Carey phoned me the doctors have said Mr. Carey could not last through the night.

AVIS. Poor Mrs. Carey! He's been ill a long time, but I don't suppose that makes it any easier for her to give him up!

CLYDE. It is a sad thing when a break of any kind comes, to separate two people who have loved each other.

AVIS. Mrs. Bartlett said the Careys had been so happy together all their married life!

CLYDE. Perhaps because the chords of their faith were never strained.

AVIS. And perhaps because the big world outside had nothing so precious to offer either of them as their love for each other.

CLYDE. That reminds me—I haven't yet asked you how it seemed to be playing your violin in public again?

AVIS. When?

CLYDE. This past week, of course, while you were away.

AVIS. But, dearie boy, I didn't play in public, nor even take my violin from its case, as it happened.

CLYDE. (*Unbelievably*) What admirable self-control!

AVIS. Clyde! Why, how odd that sounded! Almost as if you meant to be sarcastic! And I don't know in the least what you mean by "admirable self-control."

CLYDE. Why, your having the will-power to keep from putting yourself to the test of a public appearance, of course. You see, it might have proved to you that the glamour of the old life had got the better of your love for home and me. We should be entirely willing to abide by the result of such an experiment—both of us.

AVIS. But, Clyde, my music has nothing to do with my love for you. And, after all, I'm a free woman. You mustn't put fetters on my soul. I had a perfect right to take my violin to New York, yes, and even to play if I had chosen to do so. It wouldn't have been any sin against our love—or you.

CLYDE. (*With meaning*) Even if you had played in public?

AVIS. Even if I had played in public—yes.

CLYDE. (*Slowly*) You have nothing more to say to me—to tell me—before I go?

AVIS. Only to give Mrs. Carey my sincere love and sympathy.

CLYDE. (*Cries out in agony*) Avis! Avis!

AVIS. Clyde, why do you look at me like that? You—you frighten me! Why did you cry out as if I—I had made you unhappy?

CLYDE. A house built upon the sands. To think

that house should be yours and mine! (*Goes hastily out door c.*)

AVIS. Clyde! (*Starts to open door, then turns back. Exclaims piteously.*) What have I done? (*Sinks down, half dazed, speaking almost in a whisper.*) Dear Lord, what have I done?

CURTAIN

ACT III

TIME: *A few hours later. Evening.*

SCENE: *Living-room of parsonage as before. The sofa is filled with bundles for the rummage sale.*

DISCOVERED: SOPHIE and BOB standing by table. SOPHIE is holding up a framed announcement of rummage sale, while BOB attaches a cord at back.

BOB. I painted that sign myself in bright red. When it's put up on the parsonage gate, nobody can help seeing it.

SOPHIE. I hope folks won't think it's a scarlet fever sign and be scared to come in. *(Giggles.)*

BOB. Gee, that's a nice thing to say when I spent two hours painting it.

SOPHIE. I didn't mean it wasn't real artistic, Bob. It is. *(Giggles.)*

BOB. Is it, Sophie?

SOPHIE. Umhmph. *(Giggles.)*

MRS. BARTLETT. *(Enters from study)* I hope there'll be a big crowd on Saturday afternoon. Mr. Hollister's study is so light and large—just the place for a rummage-sale. Well, are you goin' to spend another hour fixin' up that gate-sign? *(BOB and SOPHIE sigh.)* 'Twon't do you any good to look sheepish. You're both too young to be thinkin' about courtin' an' I won't put up with it.

SOPHIE. (*Walking away from BOB*) Who's thinking about courting, I'd like to know? I'm not.

MRS. BARTLETT. Bob is. (SOPHIE, *pleased, giggles self-consciously.*) Not because it's you, though, Sophie Anderson. He's been tryin' to make love to some girl or other ever since he wore dresses. (*Enter LIBBIE and JANE from study.*)

BOB. (*Protestingly*) Now, Maw!

LIBBIE. (*Comes to R. of MRS. BARTLETT*) I've arranged all the books and china on that shelf, Mrs. Bartlett, the way you told me to.

JANE. (*Comes to L. of MRS. BARTLETT*) I've separated the children's clothes from the grown-ups.

MRS. BARTLETT. Good! I don't suppose you'll be needed again until the sale Saturday, either of you. Then I'll put you in charge of the smaller-articles table.

LIBBIE. Which one of us in charge, Mrs. Bartlett, please?

MRS. BARTLETT. Both of you, of course, you Siamese twins.

JANE. We are no longer twins, Mrs. Bartlett.

LIBBIE. No, indeed, Mrs. Bartlett.

MRS. BARTLETT. What's the matter with you two anyhow?

LIBBIE. We are mad and never going to speak to each other again.

JANE. At least, if we ever do, Libbie has got to speak first.

MRS. BARTLETT. Now, now, children, don't be foolish. One of you has got to speak first—the one whose fault it was to begin with.

JANE. It was Libbie's fault in the first place.

LIBBIE. No, Mrs. Bartlett, it was distinctly Jane's. She told me yesterday that she'd wait at the drug-store for me to go to school with her, and when I got there she'd gone on ahead without me.

JANE. Mrs. Bartlett, I had merely gone to do an errand for my Aunt Clarissa, and when I came *back* to the drug store, Jane had been there and left without leaving any message for me whatever.

LIBBIE. But, Mrs. Bartlett, I never dreamed of Jane's coming back!

MRS. BARTLETT. There now, it's all explained and the sky is clear again.

JANE. But Libbie's got to speak first.

LIBBIE. No, Mrs. Bartlett, Jane should speak first.

BOB. Say, why don't you both speak first and have it over with? Sophie, you count "one, two, three—speak!"

SOPHIE. All right. One—two—three—speak! (*LIBBIE and JANE open mouths elaborately, but do not speak.*)

BOB. Struck dumb? How sad, and both so young! (*SOPHIE giggles.*)

LIBBIE. I knew Jane wouldn't and that's why I didn't.

JANE. I knew Libbie wouldn't, and that's why I didn't.

MRS. BARTLETT. Why can't you make it up without speaking at all? Just rush into each other's arms.

LIBBIE. (*To MRS. BARTLETT*) Yes, why can't we?

JANE. (*To everyone in general*) That does seem easier.

BOB. Sophie, count for the rush. (*He gets behind JANE.*)

SOPHIE. (*Gets behind LIBBIE*) One—two—three—rush! (*The girls stand still, but suddenly BOB and SOPHIE act in unison, shoving them forward until they land in each others' arms. Simul-*

taneousty the girls cry out each others' names and embrace.)

LIBBIE. Oh, we'll never, never get angry with each other again, will we?

JANE. I should say not! Life without you, Libbie, is just a barren waste.

LIBBIE. It's nothing more than a monogamous prairie.

MRS. BARTLETT. What kind of a prairie?

LIBBIE. Monogamous. That means one day is just as dreary as the next.

MRS. BARTLETT. I guess "monotonous" is the word you was feelin' for, Libbie.

JANE. Well, anyhow, she meant it's something nobody would want to be. Oh, Libbie, I'm so happy!

LIBBIE. Oh, Jane, so am I! *(They exit at c., chattering of how they came to misunderstand each other. "You know, I thought you said you'd be there when I got there," etc.)*

MRS. BARTLETT. This happens every other day, regular. I'm going to see how they've arranged that big table. *(Exits into study.)*

BOB. Sophie, let me hold your hand.

SOPHIE. What for, I'd like to know?

BOB. Because I'm built that way.

SOPHIE. When your mother isn't around.

BOB. Sophie, you're awful cold to me.

SOPHIE. Indeed?

BOB. Cold as liquid air. I'm so froze if you beat me against the wall, I'd bust into a million pieces.

SOPHIE. I'm going up to Boston to spend the rest of the winter with Aunt Hattie.

BOB. Talking to me?

SOPHIE. No, talking to myself. There's a boarder over to Aunt Hattie's I'll fall in love with, the minute I see him—I know I shall.

BOB. Well, he'd better not show up around here.

SOPHIE. He's six feet an inch and a half in height. I do love men when they're extra tall!

BOB. Then I suppose you'd like a fellow better if he went around on stilts.

SOPHIE. His neckties are so quiet and gentlemanly.

BOB. (*Feeling his bright tie consciously*) But sporty ones are the style.

SOPHIE. And he has the dearest gentlemanly feet!

BOB. (*Trying to hide his feet*) Oh, darn it all, what has a fellow's feet got to do with love? Gee! Thought I heard ma coming.

SOPHIE. More than that, he's so manly and independent, his own mother doesn't dare interfere with him. She is actually afraid to say a word, when he is talking to a girl.

BOB. (*Not seeing his mother, who has just appeared in study door*) So's my mother actually afraid to say a word when I'm talking to a girl!

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Entering*) She is, is she? Young man, you march out there an' put up that sign this minute, an' then go home. Stop gapin' at Sophie Anderson, an' march!

BOB. (*Takes up sign and exits with it, door c.*) Well, I'm marchin', ain't I?

MRS. BARTLETT. The idea of two infants that have barely got through cuttin' their teeth, talkin' about rebellin' against parental authority. Well, let's put the rest of the bundles in this basket an' carry 'em into the study. I thought you came here to help.

SOPHIE. (*Assists packing bundles*) I did, Mrs. Bartlett. (*Giggles.*) I can carry this all by myself if you want me to.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, I don't. I wonder what's keepin' Mrs. Hollister.

SOPHIE. She said she might call around before

she came home and tell the parents of the infant class it wasn't safe for them to come to Sunday School until the ceiling is fixed. (*They exit into study, after loading basket with remaining bundles.*)

(*Door c. opens, and AMANDA walks in, in street attire, followed by DEACON PETTIBONE.*)

AMANDA. If you've got anything to say to me, you can say it in here. I've just been in that warm library room drawin' out a book, an' I'm not goin' to ketch my death of cold in the night air talkin' to a man, Deacon or no Deacon.

DEACON. That's all right, Amandy. I'd just as soon talk here as anywhere. (*Goes to door up R. and looks off.*) Don't believe there's any danger of that ceilin' fallin' down—any more of it. Let the scholars set their benches to the other side of the room. Mis' Hollister's always a-findin' fault about somethin'.

AMANDA. But I put up with it, seein' as I only work out for an accommodation.

DEACON. They're both away from home, you said?

AMANDA. They was when I left to go to the library, but Mis' Hollister might be upstairs now for all I know. Want me to call her?

DEACON. No. Did you hear any words between the parson an' her before he started over to Southport?

AMANDA. How did you know he started?

DEACON. Saw him gettin' on the car.

AMANDA. Why didn't you run an' ketch up with it, an' ask him for yourself if there was any words. I always try to tend my own business, even if I *do* only work out for an accommodation.

DEACON. (*Hypocritically*) That's right, Amandy.

I was hopin' you did. Good girls are scarce in Cosy Corners—— If somethin' better offered—like keepin' house for a widower after his daughter was married an' gone away—you'd be glad enough to leave here, wouldn't you?

AMANDA. Depends on how much more wages they'd offer me.

DEACON. 'Tain't exactly a question of wages, 'Mandy.

AMANDA. 'Tis with me.

DEACON. Well, s'posin'—I'm only sayin' "s'posin'"—but s'posin somebody was to offer to marry you instead of payin' wages——

AMANDA. I'd like to see anybody try it.

DEACON. What? Ain't you 'shamed of bein' an old maid?

AMANDA. Who's an old maid? I'm a good-dispositioned Methodist, unmarried, single female woman, an' I'm goin' to stay one.

DEACON. Well, if that's the way you feel about it, no use talkin' about offerin' you the chance to better yourself.

AMANDA. Where are you goin'?

DEACON. Goin' home.

AMANDA. (*Grabs him by the coat tail*) Stop right where you are. You say you was goin' to, an' say it quick, or you don't get out of that door to-night!

DEACON. Thought you'd change your mind when you saw your chance a-goin'. Set right down here beside me, 'Mandy. (*SOPHIE peers from study, giggles and draws back.*) What's that?

AMANDA. It sounded like a cat or somethin' like it. Well, I'm a-settin'. (*Shooing the cat.*) Shoo!

DEACON. Scatt!—You can sit jest as close as you're a mind to. (*He sits a bit closer to her, both very stiff and self-conscious.*)

AMANDA. It's all right so long as we don't touch.

DEACON. It's a considerable come-down for me, 'Mandy, makin' up to a girl that works out an' belongs to a strange congregation, but my daughter is liable to enter the bonds of matrimony any day now, an' leave home to serve her lord an' master, as it's proper all females should—an' marryin' you would be cheaper than payin' wages. It may spite the Hollisters considerable, your leavin' 'em in the midst of so many tribulations as the Lord seems to be sendin' on 'em, but once havin' made up my mind, there shan't anythin' stop me from enterin' the marriage state with you. Will you name the weddin' day?

AMANDA. No, I won't! If you think I'm goin' to trade off a place where I run the roost an' git good wages for it, for one where I'd have to work myself to skin an' bone for my board, an' mighty poor board at that—an' be obliged to set across the table from an old weasel-eyed, lantern-jawed has-been like you—jest to keep from bein' called an old maid—you're considerable mistaken!

DEACON. (*Rising, furiously*) Then what did you lead me on to propose for, you ugly-faced vinegar-tongued female, if you wa'nt goin' to take me?

AMANDA. 'Cause you've twitted me more than once about my unwedded state, an' I wanted everybody to know I had an offer from skinflint Deacon Pettibone, an' refused him!

DEACON. You can't prove you had an offer from me. Nobody heard me make it.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Walking with SOPHIE outside study door, laughing*) Yes, they did, Cousin Jonathan.

DEACON. So you've been listenin'—both of you? Well, 'twon't do no good to tell what you've heard, for there ain't goin' to be anybody that'll believe but what I was jokin'.

MRS. BARTLETT. They'll have a chance to, Jonathan. I ain't got no special love for 'Mandy, but I'll testify she's had a genuine proposal, an' the day of miracles ain't past! (*As DEACON with angry exclamation starts for door to living-room.*) Don't go that way. The plasterin' is loose, an——

DEACON. It ain't, neither. You 'tend to your own business—all of you—an' I'll tend to mine.

AMANDA. I can hardly wait till mornin' to start round the neighborhood tellin' 'bout my proposal. (*DEACON, with smothered exclamation of rage, exits R. into living-room.*) I guess I'll have time to finish my mince-meat an' take in a couple of families to-night.

(*AVIS enters door L. She has on long coat, completely covering her dress.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, Avis, I didn't know you'd got home! Strange things have happened since you went out for your walk.

AVIS. (*Anxiously*) Clyde hasn't telephoned over from Southport, has he?

MRS. BARTLETT. No, it's nothin' like that. Amandy—— (*Terrific crash is heard.*)

SOPHIE. What's that?

AVIS. The plastering!

MRS. BARTLETT. The Deacon!

AMANDA. Land sakes, am I a widow 'fore I've told anybody?

DEACON. (*Entering from R., covered with plaster.*) Consarn it—I'm chokin'. Why didn't somebody warn me 'twasn't safe to open that outside door? My suit is ruined!

AVIS. I'm sorry, Deacon Pettibone, but I can't help feeling glad it wasn't my little infant class the plastering fell on.

MRS. BARTLETT. You said you had to be con-

vinced repairs were needed. Jonathan. I reckon you're convinced.

DEACON. Holliter's been crackin' that ceilin' with a hammer jest so this would happen. I've got a few things to say to the church board this next meetin', an' I'm a-goin to say 'em! (*Exits c.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, of all the sputterin' I ever heard! He was so mad he didn't know what he was sayin', Avis. Don't pay any attention to him. (*Low whistle sounds outside.*)

SOPHIE. I must be going, Mrs. Hollister. Ma doesn't like for me to be out too late alone.

MRS. BARTLETT. That wa'nt Bob Bartlett I heard whistlin', was it?

SOPHIE. Mrs. Bartlett, I'm not going because your son whistled, even if I did recognize the sound. (*Giggles.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, if I didn't want to have a few minutes' talk with Mrs. Hollister, I'd soon attend to him for hangin' around when I told him to go on home!

SOPHIE. Good-night.

AVIS. Good-night, Sophie. Sorry you have to go. (*Exit SOPHIE, c.*)

AMANDA. (*Enters at R.*) Don't see why I can't finish choppin' my mince-meat in here, seein' as I only work out for an accommodation. (*Sits herself at R. with chopping bowl.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*To AVIS*) Is your head any better, dear, than before you took your walk?

AVIS. Much better. So much so that when I came home I remembered something you asked of me, and did it to please you. (*Slips off her coat, showing elaborate evening dress.*) Just as I looked when I played at your cousin's tea, in Boston.

MRS. BARTLETT. I can't think of anythin' but a beautiful picture, walkin' right out of its frame.

AMANDA. Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity, as the Bible says.

MRS. BARTLETT. But sometimes I think there's as much uplift in beauty as there is in sermons.

AMANDA. (*Looking at gown*) Is that skirt real or imitation? (*Feels of skirt.*) Real! (*Disapprovingly.*) Such extravagance! When you goin' to put on the waist?

AVIS. Why, it's on already, Amanda. This is all there is.

AMANDA. Wear any furs or anythin' with it?

AVIS. No, why should I?

AMANDA. If anyone saw me in a thing like that flauntin' immorality an' pneumonia at one an' the same time—I'd drop dead in my tracks—I know I would.

MRS. BARTLETT. Maybe it would be the person that saw you wearin' it that would drop dead, Amandy.

AMANDA. It's the most scandalous dress I ever laid eyes on. I don't believe in lookin' at it. How is it cut in the back? (*AVIS turns around for her to see. Loud knocking is heard off R.*) There, I jest knew it. I never can set a minute that somebody don't start knockin' at that kitchen door, but they ain't goin' to set down an' stop me from goin' out to make some calls! (*Exits R.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, we've got a real nice lot of things arranged for that rummage sale on Saturday, an' that will mean that the ceilin' in there gets replaced if nothin' else.

AVIS. And after all, we can only take a step at a time through this puzzling world. (*Sighs heavily.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. There' there, now, you mustn't take what Clyde said too much to heart. He'll be all right again when he gets back from Southport. I

suppose it was just takin' your violin to New York with you that made him think you'd got tired of your home and your life here.

AVIS. But, of course, after what he said, my little dream of earning money to help rebuild the church has all gone up in smoke.

MRS. BARTLETT. I suppose so. It seems to me sometimes that men grow queerer every day, an' that the more you give in to their notions, the more unreasonable they get. Not that I'm advisin' you to do any different. Of course that's between you an' Clyde.

AVIS. If the money isn't raised through my playin', though, we mustn't lose faith but that somebody or something else will supply it. Clyde's work here *must* go on.

MRS. BARTLETT. Of course it must, and it will. Well, good-night, dear. I'll see you again soon.

AVIS. Do, Mrs. Bartlett. Good-night. (*Sees her to door c. Sits at desk and begins to write a letter.*)

(*Door c. opens silently and EDNA steals in. She carries a satchel.*)

EDNA. (*In a whisper*) Mrs. Hollister!

AVIS. (*Springing up*) Edna, how you frightened me!

EDNA. (*Cautiously*) I didn't ring because I didn't want Amandy or anyone else to know I had come.

AVIS. Sit down, dear. I'm all alone, as it happens.

EDNA. (*Taking chair facing AVIS*) No one knows I've left the house. I climbed from my bedroom down the back porch trellis, and got to the street without being seen.

AVIS. Why, Edna, what made you do that? What has happened?

EDNA. Just what I've been afraid of. To-night when I was getting supper, Mr. Umpstead followed me out into the kitchen and asked me to marry him. He said he and father were both anxious for the match, and he hoped I'd be sensible about it. I couldn't speak for a minute. The very thought of it made me sick all over. Then he put his frowsy head down and tried to kiss me, and I pushed him away and ran upstairs.

AVIS. That ought to settle the question, I should think.

EDNA. Yes, you would think so, but I'm sure it didn't. I heard him laughing to himself as if he thought it all a joke. Mrs. Hollister—I just realized all of a sudden that I couldn't argue it out with father and face one of his rages—that I couldn't stand it at home any longer. I'm going to New York on the ten-thirty to-night. I've got the address of a boarding-house and directions for getting there, and I'm not afraid. There's my satchel, all packed.

AVIS. If the worst comes to the worst, that might be the thing for you to do, but I think you're acting hastily now. Wouldn't it be wiser and braver for you just to go quietly back to your home and take your stand once for all against being treated like a child?

EDNA. But you don't know father, and what a terrible temper he has!

AVIS. Yes, I do, Edna, but I also know you were eighteen years old last week and that it might be different with your father if he could once be brought to realize that you're now your own mistress, and can never, never be forced to marry a man you don't love.

EDNA. I suppose you think I've acted like a coward!

AVIS. No, I don't, but I want you to show me how very brave you can be.

EDNA. Oh, Mrs. Hollister, if I only *could* bring myself to face father out once—and not give in when I know he's wrong and I'm right—if I could get over the fear of his striking me— Well, I'll try, even if I fail.

AVIS. That's the girl.

EDNA. If you let me stay here until late, and everyone's asleep, I can climb back up the trellis the way I came, and no one will know I've been away. (*Bell rings.*) Mercy, I don't want to meet anybody! Where'll I go? (*AVIS opens study door.*)

AVIS. Right in there, dear. It's probably someone bringing more things for the sale. I'll call you when the coast is clear.

(*EDNA exits into study. AVIS goes to L. and calls AMANDA. Finding kitchen empty she opens door c. herself. MORRIS GRANBY steps inside.*)

MORRIS. Good-evening, Claudia! I feared I mightn't find you at home.

AVIS. Well, well, Morris Granby! What a surprise! Whatever brought you to this part of the country again?

MORRIS. (*Accepting chair she motions him to occupy*) Chance, partly. Miss Givens, my new soprano, sang at the Springfield Music Festival last night, and I said to myself this morning: "I'll just take in Cosy Corners on my way home and see how the little girl is hitting it off as a minister's wife."

AVIS. Clyde isn't at home just now, but I'm expecting him any moment.

MORRIS. Well, I hope he doesn't break his neck

to get here. I shouldn't mind at all having a little chat with you alone.

AVIS. It certainly seems strange to see you again.

MORRIS. You're looking fine. But that gown! You weren't intending to play anywhere this evening, were you?

AVIS. Mercy, no! I'm wearing it purely by accident. I've been showing it to one of my Cosy Corners friends. I feel rather silly in it sitting here in the parsonage, to tell the truth. Why, I haven't worn a concert gown before since—let me see—the night of Mrs. De Puyster Sands' musicale.

MORRIS. I remember—where the Russian pianist got so jealous of the hit you were making he strewed the rug with souvenirs from his headpiece. (*Both laugh a little, reminiscently.*) But you don't really mean to tell me you haven't played a concert since your marriage?

AVIS. Not one. I'm a minister's wife now; have my home and my big wonderful husband to look after.

MORRIS. Don't clink your fetters in my ears, Avis, it's discord. Music was the passion of your life. You must miss it—I know you do. Why, you're as out of place here as a rose in a soup kettle.

AVIS. Just the same cynic as you always were, aren't you, Morris? I can't expect you to understand what domestic happiness means!

MORRIS. You poor girl!

AVIS. Don't you dare to pity me! If I had to choose again between Clyde and my music as a lifetime proposition, my choice would be Clyde, as before.

MORRIS. Well, if you won't allow me to pity you, at least you can't stop me from pitying myself. Didn't I see you grow from a child-wonder into young womanhood—only to lose you at the start of

your real career? Oh, it wasn't the financial loss so much I minded. Music is my bug, you know.

AVIS. * (*With real sympathy*) Yes, I know. You should have been an artist yourself, Morris, and had your own career. Every one of us knew that.

MORRIS. Avis, something has come into your voice that shows you've lived and loved. That was the one quality your playing used to lack. Gad, it makes me tremble to think how you could electrify them now. Don't you sometimes long to stand before a big audience again—wouldn't the thunder of their applause be sweet to you?

AVIS. I wonder? Sometimes in my dreams at night, I fancy I'm out in the middle of a big concert platform, drawing that live something from my violin that only the presence of a crowd seemed to inspire. (*Gives slight start and changes her tone.*) But let's talk about something else, besides the might-have-beens and all that. It seems a sort of disloyalty to Clyde, though I didn't mean it so.

MORRIS. Don't pile your domesticity on too thick, little girl. You didn't think it disloyal when you played that Charities' date last week in New York. I'm a wise old owl, you know, and little escapes me.

AVIS. What Charities' date do you mean?

MORRIS. The Silver Shield Associated. I read your name among the other artists in the New York World.

AVIS. Then the New York World got me mixed with somebody else. On my word of honor, Morris, if such a notice appeared, it was all a mistake!

MORRIS. You don't mean it! By Jove! Then Hollister was right and I was wrong!

AVIS. You've seen Clyde? You were here to-day, once before?

MORRIS. Yes—briefly—and gave Hollister a copy of the paper.

AVIS. Oh, poor Clyde! Now I understand why he acted so unlike himself before he left the house. If I had only known! Why didn't he tell me he had seen you?

MORRIS. You don't deny you're negotiating with the Quimby Bureau to play a week in vaudeville with special costumes, and at fancy prices?

AVIS. (*Astonished*) You—you knew I'd had that offer?

MORRIS. Why not? I was responsible for their having made it. After I read of your appearance, I was even looking forward to your taking a special tour under my management.

AVIS. I'm sorry to disappoint you, Morris, but my only interest in the Quimby offer was that it might help me to turn over some money to our church building fund as a help to my husband's work here in Cosy Corners. So I *did* dally with the temptation of playing that one week—I don't deny it. Not that I had any idea of going back to professional life—I hadn't. And I know now I should never have even considered the Quimby proposal. I was just wording a letter to them as you came in, turning their offer down.

MORRIS. That's one on me, then, and I own I feel pretty well sold out. (*Gets up and takes his hat.*) I'll be going. I might as well. Accept my apologies for having disturbed the ministerial pond lilies on the stagnant mill-pond of your life here.

AVIS. Don't be grouchy, Morris. You'll discover a violinist some day so much bigger than I, you'll forget I was ever on your list.

MORRIS. You're not helping matters any by manufacturing words of consolation, Avis. When Fate hands me a wallop like this, somebody has got to pay. I had some twinges of conscience about advising the girl as I did at first—little fool!

AVIS. Advising what girl?

MORRIS. A pretty little idiot here in Cosy Corners. She's going on the train with me to New York to-night—expects to be a professional dancer. She stands about as much chance in that line as I do of making my debut as a prima donna.

AVIS. Then why should you encourage her to leave her home? (*Thinks of EDNA.*) Oh, Morris—the girl? Would you mind telling me who she is?

MORRIS. Ah—that's my guilty secret!

AVIS. If I guess her name correctly, will you tell me then?

MORRIS. Ha, ha, Avis, I was just spoofing you. There isn't any such girl. Guileless as ever, aren't you? No, there's no occasion for a "rescue-the-perishing" act, even if you are a minister's wife. Well, so long!

AVIS. (*Gives him her hand*) Good-bye, Morris.

(CLYDE opens door and walks in.)

MORRIS. How do again, Mr. Hollister? I really had to have a few words with my ex-star, you know, but I'm going now.

CLYDE. No, wait, please, Mr. Granby. I have some news for Mrs. Hollister I think you might be interested to hear. (*Hands telegram to Avis.*) They gave it to me as I passed the station.

MORRIS. I'm always interested in anything that concerns Mrs. Hollister.

AVIS. (*Glancing at telegram*) From the Quimby agency. Oh, Clyde, it's really too bad you should know about the Quimby's. I hadn't meant that you should. And especially since you saw that newspaper notice; it makes it all sort of hard to explain. But I was going to turn this offer down—you can see the addressed envelope there on my desk—and

that newspaper notice was all a mistake in the first place—and the reason I was writing to the Quimby's was——

CLYDE. I'm neither asking explanations nor demanding excuses, Avis, but please don't try to make a fool of me, whatever you do. It's perfectly evident what you and your friend have been planning here—you tricked out in your tinsel finery to please him!

AVIS. Kindly go, Morris. I'm sorry you came just at this time——

CLYDE. No, please remain, if you don't mind.

MORRIS. (*Looking at watch*) There's half an hour yet until train time, but what's the idea, old man?

CLYDE. The idea is that I agree with you in thinking my wife made a mistake in ever leaving the concert platform and that it is best for her to return to it.

AVIS. (*Shocked*) Clyde!

CLYDE. The half hour between now and train time will doubtless give you sufficient opportunity to discuss the necessary contracts, and so forth. I give you my word I shall enter no objections. Excuse me—I shall not interrupt again. (*Starts for study.*)

AVIS. (*Runs after him*) Clyde, listen. you *must*! Why, I hadn't a thought of going back to the concert stage. I *was* offered a short engagement that would have paid enough to help keep those builders at work—but I'd made up my mind it wasn't best to take it. You've always had that strange fear about my music—but, my dear, you come first. Won't you give me another chance to prove you come first? (*CLYDE struggles with himself for a moment before replying, and MORRIS slips out of the door.*) Clyde, answer me! How can you act like this! Your loss of faith in me at the very first test of it hurts—hurts more than anything else ever has in all my life

before. Hasn't our life together been a precious thing—isn't it worth fighting for?

CLYDE. I've been plunged into perdition, Avis. It isn't so easy to climb back.

AVIS. If you could only have been here from the first—heard every word that passed between Morris and me—you'd know how you have misjudged me.

EDNA. (*Comes from study*) Mr. Hollister, may I speak in?

CLYDE. Edna!

EDNA. I was in your study when Mr. Granby came—have been there all this time. But I wanted him to go before I came out so I could tell you everything. He's a bad man—a wicked one—I know now—— (*Sharp rap comes on door, made by the butt of a whip.*)

AVIS. What's that? (*CLYDE flings door open. DEACON enters, carrying buggy whip.*)

DEACON. Excuse me, Hollister, but I thought I saw Edna through the study window, an' here she is! What are you runnin' over here at night for, when you ought to be at home an' in bed?

EDNA. (*Frightened*) I—I was coming home pretty soon, Father. I—I just wanted to see Mrs. Hollister. There's to be a sale on Saturday——

DEACON. What you got on your Sunday clothes for? You wa'nt goin' to a dance unbeknown to me?

EDNA. No, no!

DEACON. You wa'nt plannin' to run away from home? You rebellious—— (*Raises whip.*)

EDNA. Don't strike me again with that, Father. I was coming right home, indeed I was. Mrs. Hollister, wasn't I going back home?

AVIS. She was going back, Mr. Pettibone, she told me so herself. There's nothing to be gained by threatening her.

DEACON. That's my business, Mis' Hollister. But as long as she was comin' home right away— Whose satchel is that? Looks like some one was cal'latin' to take a train—

EDNA. (*As DEACON comes toward her*) It's Mrs. Hollister's, Father. I—I was helping her pack it. It's Mrs. Hollister's. She asked me to help. Oh, Father—Please!

DEACON. Well, it's a good thing she's goin' somewhere instead of you. Come along. I've got the buggy down to the corner. Come along. (*Almost throws EDNA out of door.*) Good-night. (*Exits c., after EDNA.*)

CLYDE. So Edna knew that you and Granby were planning to leave this house together to-night before I came!

AVIS. You can believe such a thing of me—your wife! You *dare* to believe it?

CLYDE. (*Points to satchel*) With the proof of your intention confronting me—what other explanation can there be?

AVIS. None. I'm through with explanations. I'll not humiliate myself another moment. (*Goes to take up her violin from top of desk. CLYDE rushes and seizes it.*) Give me my violin!

CLYDE. (*Waving her back*) No!

AVIS. (*As he starts away from her, holding violin behind him*) What are you going to do? Give that back to me. It's very old and precious. Don't harm it, Clyde! Don't put my love to this fearful test! That violin is as sacred to me as if it were alive—sacred!

CLYDE. Yes—more sacred than your marriage vows—an idol of wood—a devil it is my duty to destroy! (*Breaks violin over corner of chair.*)

AVIS. My violin—oh! (*With sudden determination.*) You have decided it. I'm going back to the old life—forever! (*Gets long cape from rack, takes hat and goes out door c.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV.

TIME: *Four months later.*

SCENE: *The same.*

DISCOVERED: AMANDA, *setting pan of flour on chair by table.* SOPHIE is at table mixing bread.

SOPHIE. Of course I can mix the bread, Amandy. I'm so happy to think of seeing Mrs. Hollister again, I could mix a whole wagon load without getting tired.

AMANDA. I don't s'pose she'll stay long enough to set down to a meal. Any woman that's been gone from her lawful wedded husband for nearly four months, needn't expect a brass-band an' a reception committee when she's only come back to pack up the odds an' ends belongin' to her, an' light out again.

SOPHIE. I'll be just as glad to see her as if I were a brass band and a reception committee rolled into one. Don't you look forward to it, too, 'Mandy?

AMANDA. (*Takes up pan of apples*) Well, I ain't got nothin' personal against her, except her runnin' around the country fiddlin' an' lettin' everybody see her in them sawed-off waists. But I ain't crazy for her to come back. I run things without her around here now to suit myself, and that's somethin'. (*Starts to peel apples.*)

SOPHIE. Amandy, whatever made Mrs. Hollister

leave Cosy Corners in the first place? I know she wasn't to blame, nor Mr. Hollister either—but something dreadful must have happened.

AMANDA. I wish folks'd stop askin' me questions. I was over to Mrs. Smith's tellin' about my proposal from Deacon Pettibone, when whatever happened *did* happen, an' the next mornin,' there was Mr. Hollister lookin' white as a wax candle, informin' me his wife had gone away for a few days. The few days has turned out to be four months instead. Seems like I'd ought to be told *somethin'* when I only work out for an accommodation! (*A whistle sounds outside.*)

SOPHIE. Oh, Amandy, that's Bob's whistle! Not that I care whether he's coming in here or not, but do take down my curl paper, please, Amandy. My hands are all stuck up with dough.

AMANDA. I'm busy with apple peelin', an' if Bob Bartlett never sees anythin' more immodest than a curl-paper, he's doin' well. (*Bell rings.*) Seems to me if it's nobody but Bob Bartlett, he might have come in the kitchen way. (*Opens door.*)

SOPHIE. Bob Bartlett isn't a nobody!

BOB. Ain't I, Sophie? (*Steps inside, grinning, but uneasy.*)

AMANDA. Good gracious, somethin's b'ilin over!

SOPHIE. (*As AMANDA starts for kitchen*) Amandy, if I were on speaking terms with Bob Bartlett, I would tell him his ma is in the study talking to Mr. Hollister, and that he'd better run in there for fear I'll try to vamp him, in her absence. (*Giggles. AMANDA exits into kitchen.*)

BOB. Sophie, your curlimekew is coming loose. Let me fix it.

SOPHIE. Bob Bartlett, don't you dare! (*She goes to one side of the table, he stands the other.*)

BOB. You've had a grouch for a week. It isn't fair not to tell a fellow what's he's done.

SOPHIE. (*In tones of mysterious accusation*) Sunday night!

BOB. (*Aggrievedly*). There you go again! What about Sunday night?

SOPHIE. What's the use of people pretending?

BOB. (*Reflectively*) Sunday night!

SOPHIE. Sunday night.

BOB. Went to church with you.

SOPHIE. And Phoebe Hoskins.

BOB. Sat with you.

SOPHIE. And Phoebe Hoskins.

BOB. Told you "Good-night."

SOPHIE. And Phoebe Hoskins! I waited on the sidewalk, but there was a bright light inside the front door curtains, and I saw your two heads against it. (*Sobs convulsively, as she goes back to mixing bread.*) If you don't wipe my eyes, my tears will drop into Mrs. Hollister's bread and make it bitter.

BOB. (*Takes his handkerchief and wipes her eyes*) There. Anybody'd think I'd kissed Phoebe Hoskins from the way you act.

SOPHIE. Bob Bartlett, you're not going to deny it?

BOB. (*With virtuous indignation*) I guess a fellow can bite off a piece of chewing gum a girl's holding in her mouth without kissing her if he wants to, can't he?

SOPHIE. Oh, Bob, was that all?

BOB. (*Conscientiously*) Well, I sort of bumped her face doing it—calculated the distance wrong, but you know there's only one girl in the world for me! (*Puts his hands in dough along with hers.*)

SOPHIE. You'll spoil the bread. What are you trying to do?

BOB. Trying to put a ring on your finger. I've

dropped it. Where is it? What's this stuff made of—glue?

SOPHIE. *(As he struggles with dough)* Take your hands out. 'Mandy'll kill us!

BOB. I've got to find that ring. It's almost gold!

SOPHIE. Suppose someone should bite on it and break a tooth!

AMANDA. *(Calls from kitchen)* Sophie, is that bread about ready to put in tins? *(SOPHIE and BOB start away from table, putting their hands behind them.)*

BOB. Whoever swallows that bread can set up for a jewelry store.

SOPHIE. You'd better let me work at it a little longer, 'Mandy. *(AMANDA enters.)*

AMANDA. What for, if it's ready. *(Puts hands in dough.)* Suds an' seas, what's this?

BOB. *(In despair)* Durned if she didn't!

AMANDA. *(Fishes out ring)* I declare—it's a ring! Must have come as a prize with the flour!

BOB. That's mine!

SOPHIE. Yes, and it belongs to me.

AMANDA. Well, if it belongs to both of you, looks to me like it didn't belong to neither one. An' bein' as I only work out for an accommodation, what I find, I hold onto. *(AMANDA picks up bread-pan and starts to exit with it. BOB sits despairingly in pan of flour on chair.)*

SOPHIE. *(As she follows AMANDA off toward kitchen)* Oh, Amandy—wait! It's the really truly truth! *(Giggles hysterically and exits into kitchen after AMANDA.)*

BOB. *(Extricating himself with a moan from chair)* Oh, thunder! *(Exits into kitchen, dusting flour from trousers, and carrying pan.)*

(Enter from study, CLYDE and MRS. BARTLETT.)

MRS. BARTLETT. So you see, it just won't do for you to resign, Clyde. Look at the way the young folks are flockin' to church from all the towns in drivin' distance. It just seemed as if old Mr. Carey dyin' an' willin' you that five thousand dollars changed everything. The crowds began comin' to hear you preach, an' they've been comin' ever since.

CLYDE. The church is in fine condition for my successor, Mrs. Bartlett. I didn't want to go until I had accomplished at least that much; but down in my heart, I know I've been a failure here—a ghastly failure. Teaching the Christian virtues, and not living up to them myself when put to the test.

MRS. BARTLETT. I know what you mean—Avis. But you've done everything you could to make up for the way you treated her. Why, if she knew about that trip you made to New York—if she knew right now that every time she played in public, a good deal of the sweetness of her music was owin' to you——

CLYDE. Sh! That was my little secret attempt at atonement—I never want her to know.

MRS. BARTLETT. But why, Clyde, why? Even if you are separated for life, as you say, there ain't any reason why you shouldn't get to be friends again.

CLYDE. I couldn't be just friends with Avis. And even if I could, she wouldn't wish to be friends with me: When I broke that violin, it put an end to her love for me forever. Indifference might come to take the place of that love, but never friendship. That is why she said she would prefer not to see me when she came to the house to-day.

MRS. BARTLETT. It seems so odd that in three hours' time she'll be back in this room again. Bless her heart!

CLYDE. Back where I used to watch her, moving

about, humming a happy little tune, doing everything to make home a bright place for me——

MRS. BARTLETT. You must have missed her pettin' ways, Clyde. I know how she used to put your slippers by your arm-chair—run to the door forty times to see if you was comin'——

CLYDE. Don't! (*Bows head on hands.*)

(*SOPHIE and BOB enter from kitchen.*)

SOPHIE. Oh, Ma Bartlett, Bob's given me a ring, and you're going to be my daughter-in-law—I mean I'm going to be your mother——

BOB. She means we're engaged and that she is now my fiasco.

(*Enter AMANDA from kitchen.*)

SOPHIE. There's my ring to show I'm taken. (*Shows ring.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Begins indignantly*) Well, I've just a good mind to—but what's the use?

AMANDA. (*To BOB*) Now remember, young man, you've promised me a clothes-wringer for that prize flour ring. Excelsior. None of your cheap two dollar kind.

MRS. BARTLETT. Clyde, will you contemplate them two spring chickens expectin' to hop into matrimony?

SOPHIE. Well, it's better to hop into matrimony when you're a spring chicken, than to wait until you're an old hen, and get left.

AMANDA. Them that's been proposed to, and refused said proposal, ain't what I call "left." (*Exits into kitchen, triumphantly.*)

CLYDE. Well, Bob, Sophie, I hope you'll make very sure of your love for each other before you

decide to get married. It's a natural, beautiful, but very serious step to take, and you have plenty of time before you. There's no need of haste.

BOB. Oh, we won't get married for a whole month yet, will we, Sophie?

SOPHIE. I don't care when. (*Giggles.*)

BOB. I've noticed lots in the Bible, Mr. Hollister, about wives obeying their husbands, and I'm going to begin bossing Sophie right away. (*Sternly.*) Sophie, wipe your nose! (*With a giggle, SOPHIE does so.*)

SOPHIE. If there isn't anything more to do to help Amandy, I'm going home to tell mother about us, Bob.

BOB. Tell 'Mandy your future husband forbids your staying any longer.

SOPHIE. Oh, Bob! (*Giggles. They exit into kitchen.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, I discouraged 'em both as long as I could. I sort of thought it was my duty—their bein' so young, though I haven't any objections to Sophie. Her giggle is irritatin', but sort of entertainin' too. But there, Clyde, I know I'm keepin' you from makin' out that conference report you was workin' on. I've got a word to say to Amandy an' then I'm goin'. You—you won't let me try to bring you an' Avis together while she's here?

CLYDE. No. Please, Mrs. Bartlett, don't speak of that again. (*Goes into study. Bell rings.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Calls off to AMANDA*) You needn't stop your work, Amandy. I'll 'tend the door. (*Opens door.*)

DEACON. (*Steps inside*) How do, Cynthia? I'm pretty well out of breath.

MRS. BARTLETT. Take this armchair. Land sakes, I hadn't supposed you was able to be out!

You're actin' pretty spry for a man that's been as sick as you have.

DEACON. Anybody home?

MRS. BARTLETT. Clyde's just gone into his study. I'll call him.

DEACON. (*Shakes his head*) It ain't him I want to see—it's Mrs. Hollister.

MRS. BARTLETT. I thought I told you she wasn't expected till late this afternoon. I don't know what you can be wantin' to see Mrs. Hollister about anyhow, Jonathan.

DEACON. There's lots of things you don't know, Cynthia, though I ain't expectin' you to believe it.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, well, how natural that sounds! Just like the Jonathan Pettibone you was before you was taken sick an' had to be operated on.

DEACON. Did you s'pose my sick spell had turned me into an angel or somethin'? Well, it didn't. I'm the same man as I've always been, only broke down a little in strength.

MRS. BARTLETT. You're never goin' to be as spiteful an' hard-headed again, as you've been in the last two years. Doctor Leeds said you wa'nt. I knew there was somethin' that wa'nt natural about your cantankerousness, though you always *did* have some ways I didn't like.

DEACON. (*Cold manner*) Can't everybody be as perfect as you be, Cynthy.

MRS. BARTLETT. Just to think of your sufferin' an' sufferin' from that fall you had, an' keepin' it all to yourself. Doctor Leeds said that what you'd gone through—an' without openin' your mouth about it—was enough to make an angel take off his wings an' holler for horns an' brimstone. Of course, Edna wouldn't ever have run away from home, if she'd known you was comin' down like you did.

DEACON. You know why she went, don't you?

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, everybody says it was on account of your wantin' her to marry that Firetown minister, but of course, you couldn't have *made* her do it.

DEACON. I tried to. I took the whip to her, like she was a dog or a wildcat or somethin'—instead of my own flesh an' blood! An' God ain't never goin' to forgive me. I've prayed an' prayed, but I can't get a sign of grace. She was all I had, Cynthia, an' I ain't never goin' to see her again. But, it seems like she'd write to Mis' Hollister an' let her know where she was. I just want to git her address from Mis' Hollister an' write to her, explainin' I wa'nt quite myself when I done it—that's all. Don't want her thinkin' that way of me when I'm dead an' gone.

MRS. BARTLETT. Perhaps Avis does know where Edna is. I hope so, though don't be too disappointed if she don't, Jonathan. She's written to me twice since she's been gone, an' there wa'nt a mention of Edna in either letter.

DEACON. Well, I'll go on down to the post-office. If Edna'd only write sayin' she needed some money, Cynthia, even if she said she wa'nt comin' home—I think I'd be a well man after that.

MRS. BARTLETT. Your soul's got well, Jonathan, if your body ain't. An' I believe the Lord'll set it right between you an' Edna—now you're deservin' of it. My land, I've come to believe that half the time what folks think is inside meanness, is only inside misery instead! An' we'd all ought to learn to make allowances for each other.

DEACON. If you see Mis' Hollister before I do, tell her I'm wantin' to talk with her, will you?

MRS. BARTLETT. Of course I will, Jonathan. Don't over-do, now, an' give yourself a set-back.

DEACON. I won't. (*Exits c.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Opens kitchen door, and*

speaks off) Amandy—— (*Hesitates in surprise.*) Well, what are you two doin' there in Amandy's kitchen? (*Enter LIBBIE and JANE.*)

LIBBIE. We saw Mr. Pettibone's buggy hitched at the curb——

JANE. And we aren't crazy about talking with him, so we thought we'd stay outside until he'd gone.

LIBBIE. What we came for was to find out when dear Mrs. Hollister is expected.

MRS. BARTLETT. Mercy me, not for hours an' hours! You'll have to come late this afternoon, if you want to see her!

LIBBIE. Oh, I'm just dying to see her!

JANE. So am I! I think it was just too romantic and mysterious the way she vanished from Cosy Corners.

LIBBIE. Poor dear Mr. Hollister! I never saw anyone look as handsome and tragic as he does!

JANE. Our hearts just ache for him!

MRS. BARTLETT. Now don't you flappers start in pityin' the minister too. All the old maids an' widows in town have been wallin' their eyes at him, till they've made him sick to his stomach.

JANE. Dear me, I never dreamed of walling at Mr. Hollister. Johnnie Spriggins would never speak to me again if I did.

MRS. BARTLETT. I s'pose you two will be on hand together as usual, at the social to open the new Sunday School room next Tuesday?

JANE. Well, Johnnie Spriggins has invited me, but I told him my dearest friend, Libbie, might be expecting to go with me, and that if she did, I absolutely couldn't slight her and hurt her feelings——

LIBBIE. (*Flaring up*) Indeed! I thank you very much, Jane, but Willie Graham invited me long before Johnnie Spriggins ever thought of asking you, and I told him if I went with anyone outside of my

dearest friend, who very likely would not have an outside invitation——

JANE. I'm just as popular as you are—and I'd rather go to the social with the horriddest boy in town than you, so there!

LIBBIE. Why didn't I tell Willie Graham at once that I'd go with him?

JANE. You better do it soon, or he might back out!

MRS. BARTLETT. Now, now, what cat-scratchin'! You two that have always been such friends!

LIBBIE. (*To MRS. BARTLETT*) Our interests don't seem to be the same any more.

LIBBIE. Maybe when we're married, and old, and gray——

JANE. (*Completes the idea*) —we'll understand. Yes, maybe then. (*She sighs, and her sigh is repeated by LIBBIE.*) Libbie!

LIBBIE. Jane!

JANE and LIBBIE. (*Together*) Good-bye forever! (*They rush into each others arms.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*To herself*) The four hundred an' sixty-fourth time!

JANE. I'm going home by the way of Main Street. Are you?

LIBBIE. (*Sadly*) Yes, and I suppose we might as well walk along together.

JANE. (*Resignedly*) Yes, we might as well.

LIBBIE and JANE. (*Simultaneously*) Good-bye, Mrs. Bartlett.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*In tone of great relief*) Good-bye. (*Exit LIBBIE and JANE C.*)

MARIETTA. (*Steps inside from kitchen door*) Oh, Ma Bartlett, I said you was here, an' you *are* here, ain't you?

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, of course, child! Aren't you lookin' right at me?

MARIETTA. Yes, but are you *sure* you're here?

MRS. BARTLETT. Another crazy question like that an' I'll turn you across my knee.

MARIETTA. Well, the strange lady said to make sure an' no mistake you was here an' no one was with you, an' she'd come over. She's standin' across the street now.

MRS. BARTLETT. 'Twa'nt Mrs. Hollister, was it?

MARIETTA. No, 'cause she asked if Mis' Hollister had got here when she rang our doorbell.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, wave her to come on over. Who is she, I wonder?

MARIETTA. (*At front door, waves*) She's comin'.

MRS. BARTLETT. Anybody with her?

MARIETTA. Nobody but a handbag. (*She opens the door wide, admitting EDNA, so heavily veiled as to be unrecognizable.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Come right in, Miss. I'm Mrs. Bartlett, an' if you've got any word for me from Mrs. Hollister—— (*EDNA looks at MARIETTA, draws a card from handbag and gives it to MRS. BARTLETT, who, after reading it, gives exclamation of surprise.*) Run along, Marietta, I've somethin' to say to this lady alone.

MARIETTA. What are you goin' to say?

MRS. BARTLETT. You run along.

MARIETTA. Can't I wait in the kitchen?

MRS. BARTLETT. No, an' you'll get paddled with my slipper when I get home if you ask another question.

MARIETTA. People oughtn't to take slippers to an orphan. People ought to tell orphans they could ask Sally Ann for a large piece of bread an' butter an' blackberry jam if they ran along.

MRS. BARTLETT. Well, well ask her, if nothin' else will do you!

MARIETTA. Oh, goody, blackberry jam! (*Runs out at C.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, Edna Pettibone, of all the surprisin' things! I'm mighty glad to see you, child. Of course I'll manage to show you Mrs. Hollister's own private room—just as she's asked me to.

EDNA. Not a soul has guessed who I am. I didn't want to come to Cosy Corners at all—but she made me. She stopped for something at the photographer's on the way up.

MRS. BARTLETT. Come on upstairs. To think you've been travelin' all this time with Avis an' nobody hearin' a word of it! (*They exit L.*)

(*Bell rings. CLYDE enters from study. Bell rings again.*)

CLYDE. Amandy! Amandy! (*There is no answer, and he goes to door himself. Enter AVIS, followed by BOB, carrying a satchel.*) Avis!

BOB. Gee, I was glad I happened to see Mrs. Hollister trotting along with her satchel. Won't Sophie be surprised when I tell her?

AVIS. Give Sophie my love. And I thank you, Bob, so much.

BOB. Don't mention it. You're looking fine, Mrs. Hollister. I hope you've come to stay. (*Exits C.*)

AVIS. There's been some mistake, I'm afraid. I wrote Mrs. Bartlett I was coming on an earlier train. Perhaps my letter failed to reach her.

CLYDE. I'm sure it did. She told me you were not to arrive till late this afternoon. I knew you did not wish to see me, and had made my plans to be away. I'm sorry.

AVIS. After all, it doesn't matter. If you don't mind being inconvenienced for a very short while,

I'll soon be gone. But, if you would prefer me to postpone my errand—if I am interfering with appointments or anything——

CLYDE. You are not, and once my study door closes on me, you'll not be troubled with the sight of me again. (*He staggers and catches at the back of a chair.*)

AVIS. (*Politely, as a stranger might speak*) You—you're not ill or anything, are you?

CLYDE. No, only an extra heart-beat at seeing you unexpectedly. It sort of brought back old times.

AVIS. (*Coldly*) If it is just the same to you, I think I'd rather not speak of old times. I'm really not interested in the subject.

CLYDE. Not interested! And the very sight of you makes me dizzy with rapture and pain! You bring moonlit memories and the perfume of roses with you. Avis, Avis, has that one night, that one insane jealous outbreak—changed me entirely in your sight?

AVIS. (*Hand to heart*) There's only silence in my heart to answer you now. Those old chords of pain are stifled. I want them never to vibrate again.

CLYDE. Avis, I was cruel, unmanly, unjust—but if you'll only give me one hope—a single ray—I'll fight to win back the love I have lost as a soldier fights for his flag.

AVIS. Please, please, don't, or I can not stay here another moment.

CLYDE. Forgive me. (*Goes slowly into study and closes door.* AVIS stands rigidly as he left her. Then takes off hat and coat and throws them on chair. Undoes satchel. Finds some music on table and puts it into satchel. Finds a small clock and puts it in. AMANDA begins to sing a hymn tune in a harsh voice

and AVIS, immediately, recollecting her presence for first time, goes into kitchen.)

AMANDA. (*Heard in kitchen*) Well, for the land sakes, I never——

(*Door closes, shutting out her voice. Enter MRS. BARTLETT from L. She sees AVIS's hat and coat. Listens and hears sound of her voice in kitchen. As she starts for kitchen, DEACON gives a sharp rap at door C. and enters.*)

DEACON. Cynthia—Mis' Hollister's here, ain't she? Bob told me she was. Did you tell her I wanted to see her?

MRS. BARTLETT. Not yet. You sit down there, Jonathan, an' give me a chance to go out an' say how do to her myself. But I've got this much to say—you needn't worry about Edna. Mrs. Hollister has been lookin' after her all the time she's been away.

DEACON. Thank the Lord—thank the Lord! (*In old suspicious manner.*) It's all right to say she's been lookin' after her, but how do you know she has?

MRS. BARTLETT. (*With caution*) I was handed a letter from Mrs. Hollister since I saw you; an' you've got occasion to be thankful, Jonathan Pettibone. Edna would have left Cosy Corners trustin' the promise of Morris' Granby to get her work in New York, if it hadn't been for her findin' out through Avis he wasn't meanin' to play fair. That's why, when she *did* leave home, she went straight to where Avis was. I've been learnin' all about it. (*Enter AVIS from kitchen.*) Avis! There you are at last! I never was so tickled to see anybody in my life! (*Puts her arms about AVIS.*)

AVIS. (*With emotion*) Dear Mrs. Bartlett, to see your kind face again almost makes me cry! (*Looks at DEACON, and starts back horrified at his*

changed appearance.) Why, this isn't Deacon Pettibone?

DEACON. Yes, it is, what's left of me. I—I wanted a few words with you if you've got time to spare, Mis' Hollister.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Significantly*) I'm goin' into the study, Avis, but your maid is in the next room there in case you want her for anythin'! (*Goes into study.*)

AVIS. Well, Deacon Pettibone?

DEACON. Mis' Hollister, I'm a stubborn old man—I belong to a perverse an' stiff-necked generation—it ain't easy for me to eat humble pie, but—tell me where Edna is.

AVIS. (*Gently*) But you and Edna did not get along very well together before she left home. Why should you want to know where she is?

DEACON. Because I'm different from what I was. It was Satan himself that got hold of me an' made me take the whip to her. I ain't sorry now that she didn't agree to marry Parson Umpstead—he wa'nt suitable for her—I must have been sort of crazy to think he was. I ain't expectin' Edna to come home—but I want her to know I ain't the man any more that took a whip to her.

AVIS. Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that. I hope you are different, Deacon Pettibone, and that you're going to take it right when I tell you I have brought Charlie into Edna's life again—because I knew they loved each other—and that she's going to marry him.

DEACON. Goin' to marry Charlie?

AVIS. Yes.

DEACON. I ain't against it. He's a good boy—if he is a leetle too fond of dancin'. An' she's goin' to marry him! That means, I s'pose, she won't have no occasion to come home, an' I'll never see her

again. (*Takes handkerchief and wipes his eyes. AVIS motions to L., where a door has gently opened. EDNA comes out and AVIS exits into same room, leaving EDNA alone with the DEACON.*)

EDNA. (*Tremulously*) Poor old Daddy!

DEACON. (*Looks up*) Edna—'Tain't you! (*They embrace.*) My little girl! Listen, Edna, if you an' Charlie want to come back to Cosy Corners—I'll turn over my business to him. He ain't got my brains, but I'll risk it. An' I'll build you your own house to live in—big a one as you want. Fancy trimmin's if you say so——

EDNA. Father, you look so thin and starved! That's all I can think of now.

DEACON. I've missed them corn fritters you used to make.

EDNA. We'll go right over to the house and I'll bake you some. We'll talk about Charlie and everything while I'm there.

DEACON. (*As she starts to help him*) No need to help me. I'm feelin' better every minute. (*They exit c., together.*)

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Enters from study*) Avis, Avis, where are you?

AVIS. (*Enters from L. with arm full of laces, ribbons, etc., and most prominent of all, a beautiful negligee*) I didn't know I'd find so many things to go in my satchel. I'll have barely room for everything.

MRS. BARTLETT. (*Looks at AVIS, sadly*) Dear me, dear me! It's all I can do to keep from settin' you down hard in that chair, an' pilin' on you to keep you there. (*AVIS holds up negligee and gives it a slight shake to remove wrinkles.*) H'm! That was one of your weddin' breakfast wrappers that Clyde liked particular, wasn't it? (*As AVIS, without replying, save by a shrug, starts to fold it away.*)

Now, now, do let that wait an' sit down an' talk with me a minute. (*AVIS takes a chair.*)

AVIS. I can't talk very long.

MRS. BARTLETT. Those newspaper notices you sent me in your last letter were grand!

AVIS. Yes, weren't they wonderful! And vaudeville was an untried field for me, too!

MRS. BARTLETT. One paper just raves about your fine violin, I notice. (*With pretended innocence.*) Was it the one you used to play on in Boston?

AVIS. (*Slowly*) No, I never told you, but that one was broken. Some rich music-lover, I don't know who—sent me my new one, just at a time when I was needing it most. It is mellow in tone—beautiful. As soon as I began to play on it, it was almost as if the spirit of my old violin had come back to me.

MRS. BARTLETT. Then I s'pose mebbe that was the one Clyde heard you play on in Worcester, that week you was there.

AVIS. Clyde heard me?

MRS. BARTLETT. He went on purpose. That's why he feels so different about your music from what he did.

AVIS. Different? How—different?

MRS. BARTLETT. Why, he says he discovered, hearin' you play before a big crowd of people, that his gift of eloquence couldn't ever do half towards inspirin' folks to lead good an' hopeful lives that your violin-playin' could. He said he'd ought to have realized such an artist belonged to the world as well as to him, an' not acted so small about it.

AVIS. Why, I can hardly believe he could change like that! But—what's the use of talking of it now? I'd rather talk of my new violin.

MRS. BARTLETT. I ain't any objection to that. (*Shows slip in her hand.*) I picked this up on

Clyde's desk just now when he wa'n't lookin'. I promised I wouldn't say nothin', but I didn't promise not to show anythin' I found. Maybe this would interest you, Avis. (*Passes slip of paper to AVIS.*)

AVIS. (*Amazed*) "Violin—\$3,400. Received payment." Mrs. Bartlett, then it was Clyde, Clyde himself that——

MRS. BARTLETT. Yes, that bought it and didn't want you ever to know. Don't that show that he loves you—an' is deservin' of a little mercy, no matter what he did?

AVIS. Clyde—— (*Looks at slip again. Chokes. Puts handkerchief to eyes. Rises.*) Mrs. Bartlett, I want you to go back in the study, and when you hear a door close—tell Clyde—oh, tell him anything to bring him here! Do you understand? Of course, he must think I have gone, or he'll never consent to come.

MRS. BARTLETT. Sometimes a white lie is excusable. (*Exits into study.*)

AVIS. (*Gives a happy little sigh, takes corsage bouquet from dress and arranges it in vase on table. Pulls armchair close to table, gets slippers and places them by armchair. Slips negligee over her dress*) There!

AMANDA. (*Enters from kitchen*) You said you wa'n't meanin' to stay, Mis' Hollister, didn't you?

AVIS. (*Pleasantly*) Yes, that's what I said.

AMANDA. Well, whether you've changed your mind or not, I've got some rights, seein' as I only work out for an accommodation. (*Picks up slippers and throws them into corner.*) As for them flowers—I ain't never been so disgusted with anything unless 'twas Deacon Pettibone, the night I refused to take his offer. Never liked flowers in the house anyway. (*Pulls flowers from vase.*)

AVIS. (*With authority*) Put those flowers back in that vase.

AMANDA. (*Amazed*) What?

AVIS. Put them back. You may take your choice—work out for an accommodation somewhere else—or stay here and do as I tell you. Mistakes or no mistakes, I mean to run the house to suit myself and my husband.

AMANDA. (*Complete cowed. Puts flowers back and returns slippers to place*) Yes, ma'am. I'll wait for further orders in the kitchen. (*Exits into kitchen.*)

(AVIS goes off L., closing door with loud bang. In a moment, MRS. BARTLETT enters from study, CLYDE close behind.)

MRS. BARTLETT. Avis ain't here, I tell you. You can look for yourself.

CLYDE. You said someone wanted to see me. There's no one about.

MRS. BARTLETT. Yes, there is. (*Goes to door c. and exits, looking back mischievously. CLYDE follows to door and opens it.*)

CLYDE. But, Mrs. Bartlett—— (*AVIS slips in from L. and he turns and sees her.*) You?

AVIS. No, a girl from China.

CLYDE. (*Stupidly*) You haven't gone? (*She shakes her head childishly.*) You've missed your train?

AVIS. No, but I'm going to!

CLYDE. (*Rapturously*) Avis! Avis! (*She goes into his arms.*)

CURTAIN

The Return of Hi Jinks

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short, author of "The Varsity Coach," "The Touch-Down," etc. 6 males, 8 females. Costumes modern. One interior scene.

This comedy is founded upon and elaborated from a farce comedy in two acts written by J. H. Horta, and originally produced at Tuft's College.

Hiram Poynter Jinks, a Junior in Hoosic College (Willie Collier type), and a young moving picture actress (Mary Pickford type), are the leading characters in this lively, modern farce.

Thomas Hodge, a Senior, envious of the popularity of Jinks, wishes to think up a scheme to throw ridicule upon him during a visit of the Hoosic Glee Club to Jinks's home town. Jinks has obligingly acted as a one-day substitute in a moving picture play, in which there is a fire scene, and this gives Hodge his cue. He sends what seems to be a bona fide account of Jink's heroism at a Hoosic fire to Jink's home paper. Instead of repudiating his laurels as expected, Jinks decides to take a flyer in fame, confirms the fake story, confesses to being a hero and is adored by all the girls, to the chagrin and discomfort of Hodge. Of course, the truth comes out at last, but Jinks is not hurt thereby, and his romance with Mimi Mayflower comes to a successful termination.

This is a great comedy for amateurs. It is full of funny situations and is sure to please. Price, 30 Cents.

June

A most successful comedy-drama in four acts, by Marie Doran, author of "The New Co-Ed," "Tempest and Sunshine," "Dorothy's Neighbors," etc. 4 males, 8 females. One interior scene. Costumes modern. Plays 2¾ hours.

This play has a very interesting group of young people. June is an appealing little figure, an orphan living with her aunt. There are a number of delightful, life-like characters: the sorely tried likeable Mrs. Hopkins, the amusing, haughty Miss Banks of the glove department, the lively Tilly and Milly, who work in the store, and ambitious Snoozer; Mrs. Hopkins's only son, who aspires to be President of the United States, but finds his real sphere is running the local trolley car. The play is simplicity itself in the telling of an every-day story, and the scenic requirements call for only one set, a room in the boarding house of Mrs. Hopkins, while an opportunity is afforded to introduce any number of extra characters. Musical numbers may be introduced, if desired. Price, 30 Cents.

Tempest and Sunshine

A comedy drama in four acts, by Marie Doran. 5 males and 3 females. One exterior and three interior scenes. Plays about 2 hours.

Every school girl has revelled in the sweet simplicity and gentleness of the characters interwoven in the charms that Mary J. Holmes commands in her story of "Tempest and Sunshine." We can strongly recommend this play as one of the best plays for high school production published in recent years. Price, 30 Cents.

(The Above Are Subject to Royalty When Produced)

SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
New and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

DOROTHY'S NEIGHBORS.

A brand new comedy in four acts, by Marie Doran, author of "The New Co-Ed," "Tempest and Sunshine," and many other successful plays. 4 males, 7 females. The scenes are extremely easy to arrange; two plain interiors and one exterior, a garden, or, if necessary, the two interiors will answer. Costumes modern. Plays 2½ hours.

The story is about vocational training, a subject now widely discussed; also, the distribution of large wealth.

Back of the comedy situation and snappy dialogue there is good logic and a sound moral in this pretty play, which is worthy the attention of the experienced amateur. It is a clean, wholesome play, particularly suited to high school production. Price, 30 Cents.

MISS SOMEBODY ELSE.

A modern play in four acts by Marion Short, author of "The Touchdown," etc. 6 males, 10 females. Two interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

This delightful comedy has gripping dramatic moments, unusual character types, a striking and original plot and is essentially modern in theme and treatment. The story concerns the adventures of Constance Darcy, a multi-millionaire's young daughter. Constance embarks on a trip to find a young man who had been in her father's employ and had stolen a large sum of money. She almost succeeds, when suddenly all traces of the young man are lost. At this point she meets some old friends who are living in almost want and, in order to assist them through motives benevolent, she determines to sink her own aristocratic personality in that of a refined but humble little Irish waitress with the family that are in want. She not only carries her scheme to success in assisting the family, but finds romance and much tense and lively adventure during the period of her incognito, aside from capturing the young man who had defrauded her father. The story is full of bright comedy lines and dramatic situations and is highly recommended for amateur production. This is one of the best comedies we have ever offered with a large number of female characters. The dialogue is bright and the play is full of action from start to finish; not a dull moment in it. This is a great comedy for high schools and colleges, and the wholesome story will please the parents and teachers. We strongly recommend it.

Price, 30 Cents.

PURPLE AND FINE LINEN.

An exceptionally pretty comedy of Puritan New England, in three acts, by Amita B. Fairgrieve and Helena Miller. 9 male, 5 female characters.

This is the Lend A Hand Smith College prize play. It is an admirable play for amateurs, is rich in character portrayal of varied types and is not too difficult while thoroughly pleasing.

Price, 30 Cents.

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SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
Now and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

BILLETED.

A comedy in 3 acts, by F. Tennison Jesse and H. Harwood. 4 males, 5 females. One easy interior scene. A charming comedy, constructed with uncommon skill, and abounds with clever lines. Margaret Anglin's big success. Amateurs will find this comedy easy to produce and popular with all audiences. Price, 60 Cents.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

A comedy in 3 acts. By James Montgomery. 5 males, 6 females. Costumes, modern. Two interior scenes. Plays 2½ hours.

Is it possible to tell the absolute truth—even for twenty-four hours? It is—at least Bob Bennett, the hero of "Nothing But the Truth," accomplished the feat. The bet he made with his business partners, and the trouble he got into—with his partners, his friends, and his fiancée—this is the subject of William Collier's tremendous comedy hit. "Nothing But the Truth" can be whole-heartedly recommended as one of the most sprightly, amusing and popular comedies that this country can boast. Price, 60 Cents.

IN WALKED JIMMY.

A comedy in 4 acts, by Minnie Z. Jaffa. 10 males, 2 females (although any number of males and females may be used as clerks, etc.). Two interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours. The thing into which Jimmy walked was a broken-down shoe factory, when the clerks had all been fired, and when the proprietor was in serious contemplation of suicide.

Jimmy, nothing else but plain Jimmy, would have been a mysterious figure had it not been for his matter-of-fact manner, his smile and his everlasting humanness. He put the shoe business on its feet, won the heart of the girl clerk, saved her erring brother from jail, escaped that place as a permanent boarding house himself, and foiled the villain.

Clean, wholesome comedy with just a touch of human nature, just a dash of excitement and more than a little bit of true philosophy make "In Walked Jimmy" one of the most delightful of plays. Jimmy is full of the religion of life, the religion of happiness and the religion of helpfulness, and he so permeates the atmosphere with his "religion" that everyone is happy. The spirit of optimism, good cheer, and hearty laughter dominates the play. There is not a dull moment in any of the four acts. We strongly recommend it. Price, 60 Cents.

MARTHA BY-THE-DAY.

An optimistic comedy in three acts, by Julie M. Lippmann, author of the "Martha" stories. 5 males, 5 females. Three interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2½ hours.

It is altogether a gentle thing, this play. It is full of quaint humor, old-fashioned, homely sentiment, the kind that people who see the play will recall and chuckle over to-morrow and the next day.

Miss Lippmann has herself adapted her very successful book for stage service, and in doing this has selected from her novel the most telling incidents, infectious comedy and homely sentiment for the play, and the result is thoroughly delightful. Price, 60 Cents.

(The Above Are Subject to Royalty When Produced)

SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
New and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

The Touch-Down

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short. 8 males, 6 females, but any number of characters can be introduced in the ensembles. Costumes modern. One interior scene throughout the play. Time, 2½ hours.

This play, written for the use of clever amateurs, is the story of life in Siddell, a Pennsylvania co-educational college. It deals with the vicissitudes and final triumph of the Siddell Football Eleven, and the humorous and dramatic incidents connected therewith.

"The Touch-Down" has the true varsity atmosphere, college songs are sung, and the piece is lively and entertaining throughout. High schools will make no mistake in producing this play. We strongly recommend it as a high-class and well-written comedy.

Price, 30 Cents.

Hurry, Hurry, Hurry

A comedy in three acts, by LeRoy Arnold. 5 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

The story is based on the will of an eccentric aunt. It stipulates that her pretty niece must be affianced before she is twenty-one, and married to her fiancé within a year, if she is to get her spinster relative's million. Father has nice notions of honor and fails to tell daughter about the will, so that she may make her choice untrammelled by any other consideration than that of true love. The action all takes place in the evening the midnight of which will see her reach twenty-one. Time is therefore short, and it is hurry, hurry, hurry, if she is to become engaged and thus save her father from impending bankruptcy.

The situations are intrinsically funny and the dialogue is sprightly. The characters are natural and unaffected and the action moves with a snap such as should be expected from its title.

Price, 30 Cents.

The Varsity Coach

A three-act play of college life, by Marion Short, specially adapted to performance by amateurs or high school students. 5 males 6 females, but any number of boys and girls may be introduced in the action of the play. Two settings necessary, a college boy's room and the university campus. Time, about 2 hours.

Like many another college boy, "Bob" Selby, an all-round popular college man, becomes possessed of the idea that athletic prowess is more to be desired than scholarship. He is surprised in the midst of a "spread" in his room in Regatta week by a visit from his aunt who is putting him through college. Aunt Serena, "a lady of the old school and the dearest little woman in the whole world," has hastened to make this visit to her adored nephew under the mistaken impression that he is about to receive the Fellowes prize for scholarship. Her grief and chagrin when she learns that instead of the prize Robert has received "a pink card," which is equivalent to suspension for poor scholarship, gives a touch of pathos to an otherwise jolly comedy of college life. How the repentant Robert more than redeems himself, carries off honors at the last, and in the end wins Ruth, the faithful little sweetheart of the "Prom" and the classroom, makes a story of dramatic interest and brings out very clearly certain phases of modern college life. There are several opportunities for the introduction of college songs and "stunts."

Price, 30 Cents.

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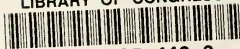
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